



THE
I N T E N T
A N D
P R O P R I E T Y
O F T H E
S C R I P T U R E - M I R A C L E S

Considered and Explained.





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THE
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SCRIPTURE-MIRACLES
Considered and Explained.

I N T W O P A R T S.

PART the FIRST treats of the MIRACLES
recorded in the OLD TESTAMENT.

A N D

PART the SECOND treats of those contained
in the NEW.

By the Rev. Dr. HENRY OWEN,
Vicar of Terling, Essex.

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THE
 IN THE
 AND
 PROPRIETY
 OF THE

SCRIPTURES

Commonly Explained.



In Two Parts
 Part the First treats of the Miracles
 recorded in the Old Testament.

AND
 Part the Second treats of those contained
 in the New.

By the Rev. Dr. HENRY OWEN,
 Vicar of St. Andrew, Essex.

LONDON:
 Printed for J. Whiston and R. White, in
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T O

Sir *Matthew Fetherston-haugh*,

BARONET,

THE FOLLOWING

T R E A T I S E

O N T H E

SCRIPTURE-MIRACLES

Is humbly inscribed,

In Testimony of that Respect which
is due to his general Character,

A N D

As a Token of Gratitude for his
particular Favours to

The AUTHOR.

T O

Sir Matthew Farber-Donagh

BARONET

THE FOLLOWING

T R E I S E



SCRIPTURE MIRACLES

Is humbly intended

In Testimony of that Respect which

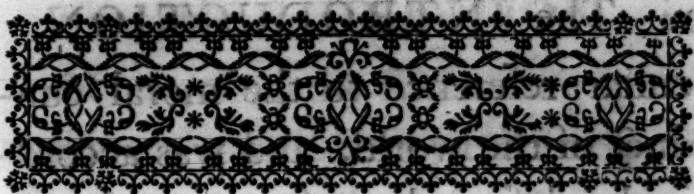
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As a Token of Gratitude for his

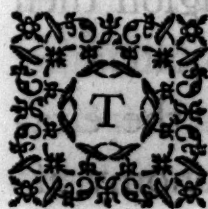
particular Favours to

The Author



T H E

INTRODUCTION.



H E Scripture contains an historical account of the several dispensations of Providence, exercised through the several ages of the world for the security and advancement of human happiness.

Now, as mankind can no otherwise attain to happiness than by the conscientious discharge of their religious duties; so it appears by the scripture-account, that every dispensation had, all along, a peculiar

B

culiar

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culiar reference to the moral conduct of the world, and was accordingly designed to secure and promote the practice of religion.

IN order therefore to discover the necessity, and to discern the propriety of these dispensations, it will be necessary to consider the correspondent circumstances of the times, and the state of religion then in the world.

TRUE religion, upon the establishment of the new œconomy after the Fall, consisted of these two parts :

I. A right knowledge of God, and of the duties we owe to him. And,

II. A right faith in the promised Redeemer, through the merits of whom the sincerely obedient were to be restored to happiness.

Now,

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NOW, had the succeeding generations retained this religion pure and incorrupt in both its parts, and acted up to the measure of its obligations, the administration of divine government would have proceeded, we may suppose, in a constant, uniform, and ordinary manner. For in such a state there could be no need of any alterations or miraculous interpositions.

BUT alas! this was far from being the case. Mankind in a short time corrupted their ways; and not only forgot the promise of a Redeemer, but even sunk into a deplorable ignorance of the one true God, and plunged themselves into an endless variety of destructive errors and fatal superstitions.

WHEN they had thus degenerated into idolatry and wickedness,

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the preservation of their happiness manifestly required, that Providence should interpose in some extraordinary manner, to recal them to the knowledge of those necessary articles, and to awaken them into a sense of their duty. Accordingly we are informed in the course of this history, that God did actually interpose at sundry times, and by two different kinds of administration, respecting the two different parts of religion which they were intended to restore.

BUT, as FAITH in GOD is the fundamental principle of all religion; therefore the first thing necessary to be done for the recovery of mankind was to bring them back to the belief and acknowledgement of that first article relating to his being and providence. “For he
“that

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“ that cometh to God, must believe that he is, *or exists*, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.”

CONFORMABLY to this, the scripture assures us, that those wonderful manifestations, so frequently displayed in the first ages of the world, were chiefly designed to convince the nations of the falsehood and vanity of the opinions they had imbibed; and to render them sensible that JEHOVAH, the Author of those amazing wonders, was the only great and true God; and consequently, that he alone was intitled to their service and obedience. And it is the business of the former part of the ensuing Treatise to shew, how wisely those manifestations were contrived, and

* *Hebrews* xi. 6.

how

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how properly they were adapted, to promote and accomplish the end in view --- to shew, how the doctrines and miracles conspired together to dispel the darkness of superstition and idolatry, and to bring mankind into the clear knowledge of their God and Creator.

AND when the world was so far enlightened by these means, as to know him, the one true God; and, in some measure, to see the vanity of the reigning, established superstitions; then it seems to be the proper time for the promised Redeemer to make his appearance, in order to instruct them in the will of God, and to direct them to those duties that are well pleasing to him.

AND the event was exactly answerable. For the Gospel informs us, that JESUS CHRIST did appear

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pear in the fulness of time --- made a perfect declaration of God's will to mankind --- and established a new institution of religion, the observance of which was to secure us the favour of God, and intitle us to the possession of eternal happiness. And it is the chief design of the latter part of this Treatise to shew, how well the doctrines he delivered were accommodated to the circumstances and necessities of the world; and how admirably the miracles he wrought were adjusted to evince the truth of his doctrines; --- and consequently to shew, how fully both in conjunction prove him to be that Prophet that should come into the world.

THIS is a general account of what may be expected in the following work; which, in consideration

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ration of the many excellent Treatises already written on the same subject, is contracted into as narrow a compass, as could well consist with perspicuity. How far it may answer the design proposed, must be left to the judgment of the candid reader. But, if it should contribute in any measure to promote the interest of true religion in this sceptical and profane age, the Author will attain his end, and think himself happy in the attainment of it.

10 JA 66

PART

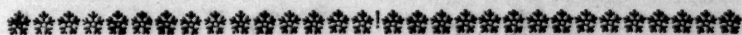


PART the FIRST.

THE
I N T E N T
A N D
P R O P R I E T Y
O F T H E

Old-Testament Miracles

Considered and Explained.



UT neque religio ulla sine sapientia suscipienda sit,
neque ulla sine religione probanda sapientia.

LACTANT. de fals. Relig. § 1.

CONSILIUM autem in hac divina sapientia fuit,
ut memoria idololatriæ deleatur, et fundamen-
tum illud magnum de existentia et unitate Dei
in gente nostra confirmetur.

MAIMON. Mor. Nev. par. iii. c. 32.



THE FIRST

OF THE

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OF THE

OLD-FASHIONED

MINISTERS

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL

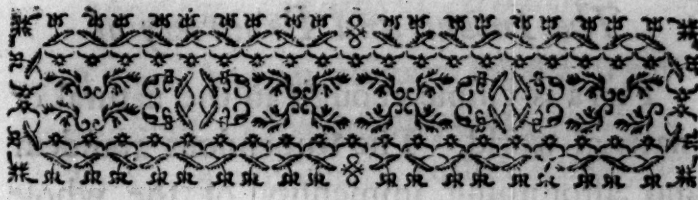
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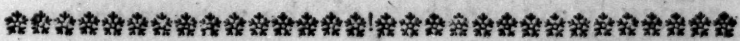
UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

BY




THE
I N T E N T
AND
P R O P R I E T Y
OF THE
Old-Testament Miracles, &c.



SECTION I.

Of the analogy of revealed religion to the constitution and course of nature. And of the credibility of miraculous interpositions.

S GOD is essentially endowed with the perfections of power, wisdom, and goodness; so are his works and productions universally stamped with these distinctive characters of their Author.

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THIS is visible enough in the natural or material world. The stupendous grandeur and astonishing immensity of the whole fabrick point out his supreme power; the beautiful symmetry, regular disposition, and admirable propriety of the several parts are manifest indications of his infinite wisdom; as the harmonious tendency and concurrence of all towards the support and welfare of the system proclaim the excellency of his goodness.

BUT do these manifestations proceed no farther? Do they not equally take place in the moral or spiritual world? As they evidently extend through the various orders of things inferior, it is a great presumption that they do so likewise through those of the superior kind. But there is no necessity to rest this point on mere presumption. We have one positive argument, arising from our natural notion of the Deity, that they must in reality so extend. For, since he is an absolutely independent Being, subject to no change or variation, it necessarily follows, that he could never deny himself, or act in any instance contrary to his own perfections; and therefore that he
must

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must have had an uniform regard to them throughout all his dispensations.

THIS conclusion of reason stands confirmed by the evidence of facts. For, if we look into the scripture, we may observe the same signatures of divinity (equal exertions of power, analogous dispositions of wisdom, and similar intentions of goodness) impressed on the works of grace, as are manifested in the works of nature. Some things there may be, some things indeed there are, in the dispensation of religion, which we cannot well account for. But do we not meet with as unaccountable appearances in the constitution of nature? And, since we attribute these, not to any defect or impropriety in the works themselves, but to the weakness of our own capacities; ought we not in reason to ascribe those to the same common cause?

IF we judge then of moral, as of natural things, we must allow, (the *criteria* being of the same kind) that the scriptural system of religion was at first planned, and all along supported, by the same great Being, who created and governs
the

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the natural system of the world. If nature be esteemed "the power of God and the wisdom of God" operating to the welfare of the body, religion is as evidently "the power of God and the wisdom of God" operating to the salvation of the soul.

To be convinced of this, let us only compare the procedure and manner of these operations in the accomplishment of their respective ends.

WE see, that the œconomy of nature is accommodated to the safety and happiness of the animal life^a: and we see likewise, that this accommodation is applied and continued, not by one uniform, immutable process, but by a course of agency variously diversified, according to the various relations and necessities of the creatures.

WE see again, that the œconomy of grace is adapted in like manner to the security and happiness of the spiritual life: and, to answer that purpose, we see moreover, that the administrations of the Deity

^a Incolumitatis ac salutis omnium causa videmus hunc statum esse hujus totius mundi atque naturæ. *Cicero de Orat. lib. iii. § 45.*

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are variously diversified, according to the various states of religion, and the moral exigences of mankind.

THUS far then both dispensations amicably accord, and mutually resemble each other. Nor does the analogy fail on a farther comparison.

IF you say, that Providence originally subjected the natural world to the direction of certain laws calculated to support and maintain its constitution; does not the scripture say, that he placed the moral world under the like regulation?

IF you find, that, when natural bodies begin to be impaired, a certain principle takes place in order to supply the waste, and restore them to their pristine condition; don't you find too, that revelation comes in with the like design, to repair the breaches of morality, and to reinstate mankind in their original uprightness?

IF you allow, that nature often changes its ordinary course, and seemingly violates its primary laws, to free itself of the annoyances of degenerate, corrupt, and noxious matter; why may not the Deity use the

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the like method, on necessary occasions, to correct the no less malignant influences of corrupt and depraved minds? If you can reconcile yourself to the marvellous in one case, upon what footing do you reject the miraculous in the other?

PERHAPS you will say, "The constitution of nature could never admit of any such thing. For miracles, being contrary to the established course, must bring confusion on the world, break its uniformity, and destroy that admirable simplicity of order, from whence the one infinite and perfect Principle is known."

BUT is it certain that the order of things is in fact so simple and uniform? or, rather, is it not certain that the contrary obtains? Can you foretel from what point the wind shall blow, or what the weather will be, to-morrow? Is not the whole revolution of the year one continued change, day differing from day, and season from season? Now, if the course of nature will admit of these lesser variations, as we see it does, for the sake of those lesser degrees of good which they

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they produce; will it not equally admit of still greater variations for the attainment of a proportionably greater good? And, however irregular such variations may appear, yet, as long as they are directed to the advancement of happiness, they are so far either from bringing confusion on the world, or destroying any principle from which the one perfect Being is known, that they rather maintain and perpetuate the order of the universe, and exhibit still clearer and more satisfying notices of the divine Providence.

THE principles of nature then, if duly attended to, are so far from disproving the possibility of miracles, that there may be cases, in which they seem to countenance their reality. Suppose any case, in which they are necessary, and at the same time proper, and you will of course suppose them to exist.

OUR great Inquiry then is,

I. "WHETHER the circumstances of mankind were ever such, as to stand in need of miraculous interpositions?"

SECTION

D

And,

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And, if so,

“ WHETHER the miracles, recorded to
“ have been done, were properly adapted,
“ in their nature and kind, to the ne-
“ cessities and occasions of such circum-
“ stances? ”

IF these two points can be rational-ly proved, the usefulness and propriety of the Scripture-miracles can be no longer questioned : and, if the internal characters of usefulness and propriety may with justice be attributed to them, we are then furnished, not only with an additional presumption in favour of their credibility, but with a sufficient answer to the principal objections urged against it : and, when the objections made to their credibility are thus removed, the external evidence of testimony comes in with its full weight to evince the truth of their existence.

LET us proceed therefore to examine the moral circumstances of mankind thro' the several periods of the world ; and see what, or whether any, necessity for miraculous interpositions might have thence arisen.

SECTION



SECTION II.

Of the moral state of the world from the Creation to the Deluge, and the dispensations relative thereto.

§ A man was created in a state of innocence^b, he seems to have had nothing more to do, to secure his happiness and the divine favour, than to preserve himself in that state by walking uprightly with his God. The circumstances of his condition therefore, during this period, required only a proper rule of conduct, to direct him, in the occurrences of life, to such things as were agreeable to the divine will, and to guard him from the commission of the contrary. Now such a rule, we find, he had. For, as he held frequent and familiar communication with the Deity, so he received from thence a just and sufficient information of things,

^b Gen. i. 26, 31.

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and was directed in the use or forbearance of them*. A method of instruction this, suitable to the inexperience of his infant-state, and fully answerable to the necessities of it.

BUT after the Fall the case was quite altered. Man's title to the favour of God became extinct with his innocence; and the same act, that lost him his happiness, exposed him to the penalty of misery. His rule of life, 'tis true, he still retained: but of what service could a rule of life be now to him, who had forfeited his life by the transgression of it? It would indeed resume its use, were he reinstated in his former privileges; but till then it was the very "strength of sin" to condemn him^d. In this state of distress, his principal concern, as it was his principal necessity, must be to recover the blessings he had lost. But, should we suppose him disposed to endeavour it, yet it was impossible for him to recover them by his own strength—as im-

^c Gen. i. 28, 30. — ii. 23, 24, comp. with Matt. xix. 5. Gen. ii. 16, 17.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 56.

possible,

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possible, as it was for him to make himself innocent, when he had become guilty. His relief and remedy therefore could be derived only from God. But, if God intended to relieve and restore him, it seems to be necessary that he should inform him of it. For, otherwise, he might have concluded that God had rejected him, and, in consequence thereof, have either languished in a fruitless inactivity, or else have proceeded (which is the most likely) with the same desperation as the fallen Angels. Now, the promise then made, that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" clearly conveyed such information to him. Consider the genius of the *Hebrew* language, the circumstances of man's situation at that time, and the agent that worked his seduction and misery; and I doubt whether it be possible to express his future restoration and recovery in more lively and comprehensive terms.

BUT, notwithstanding the promise was so full and expressive, yet man might still want some sign or miracle to assure him of

Gen. iii. 15.

its

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its completion^f. It had been comfortable, at least, to have obtained such a sign: and it had been but gracious in the Deity to grant it. May we not then suppose that he did grant it? And might not his debasing the serpent, into the abject state of a reptile, be intended as a token of the new covenant? Or, if you chuse it in other words, might not his punishing that insidious creature, in the manner represented, be designed as a proof of what he had declared concerning him? The infliction was evidently well adapted to that purpose, as it plainly pointed out to what the promise tended, and exhibited a kind of visible security for the accomplishment of the hopes it imparted. For, when *Adam*, on that promise of victory over the serpent, beheld him thus

^f We have frequent instances of *faithful* men requiring some miraculous sign, by way of security for the completion of the divine promises; and we have as frequent instances of God's indulgence to their weaknesses in granting them such signs. See *Gen.* xv. 8. — xxiv. 14. *Exod.* iii. 11, 12. *Judg.* vi. 17, 37. And would not the same sentiments, which prompted these men to make such requests in *later* and *more experienced* times, prompt our first parent, with still greater force, to make the like request on the *first* promise? — except you will suppose, that God was so gracious as to prevent his petition.

instantly

instantly humbled and debased; would he not readily admit this present, initial degradation of his enemy as a significant prelude to, would he not naturally esteem it as a comfortable pledge of, his future and final overthrow? Truly, one would almost be tempted to think, that he must have broke out into the like grateful acclamation at this sight, as *Simeon* uttered at the sight of Christ: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace — for mine eyes have seen thy salvation &c."

It is needless, I presume, to insist any longer on this point. Let us then advance forwards, and see what effect the doctrine of this prophecy, supported by the evidence of its attendant miracle, had upon the conduct of mankind.

Our first parents, in all probability, were duly affected with this instance of mercy, and testified their gratitude for what God had done by their steady performance of what he required. It was not long, however, before they observed the pernicious effects of their great offence in

* *Luke* ii. 29, 30.

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the contrary behaviour of some of their children ^h. For *Cain* and his descendents, following the propensities of their corrupt inclinations, fell away, regardless of their duty, into all the abominations of vice and immorality ⁱ.

Now, since they were confessedly so depraved in their morals, 'tis not unlikely that they were also reprobates concerning the faith. What defections they were guilty of in this respect, we cannot be certain. Several Authors have charged them with idolatry ^k, and some with denying a future state ^l. And indeed, if we consider the influence of sensuality, how apt it is to debase the mind, and extinguish the evidence of things not seen, the charge will appear but too well grounded.

^h *Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. I. c. ii. § 2. Ed. Havercamp. 1726.*

ⁱ *Joseph. ubi supra. Eutych. Annal. p. 25.*

^k *Targ. Onkel. et Jonathan Ben-Uziel in Gen. iv. 26. Maimon. de Idololatria. Selden de Diis Syr. Proleg. c. iii.*

^l The *Jerusalem Targum* and that of *Jonathan Ben-Uziel* introduce *Cain* conversing with his brother *Abel* in these words — לֵית דִּין וְלֵית דִּין — *Non est judicium, nec est judex; non est seculum futurum, nec dabitur præmium bonum jussis, nec ultio sumetur de improbis, &c.* Vide in *Gen. iv. 8.*

If you admit this to be the case, something, 'tis plain, was necessary to be done, as well to correct the erroneoufness of their principles, as to reform the depravity of their manners. With this view, then, a second revelation came seasonably in, correspondent to their necessities and condition. *Enoch* was commissioned to preach the doctrine of a future state, and to declare the certainty of a future judgment. In pursuance of this commission, he opened the prospect of another life, and laid it before them in its different circumstances; shewed them what glorious rewards awaited the righteous, what dreadful punishments were reserved for the wicked^m; that, knowing the encouragements and terrors of the Lord, they might be influenced thereby to return

^m *Enoch*, the seventh from *Adam*, prophesied of these, — *Jude* 14, 15, — saying, “ Behold, the Lord cometh, with
“ ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon
“ all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of
“ all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily com-
“ mitted, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly
“ sinners have spoken against him;” and therefore, by the
rule of contraries, to reward “ them, who, by patient
“ continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and
“ immortality.”

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to himⁿ. And what can be imagined more affecting? What could prevail, if this could not? Had it rested only on the bare credit of the preacher, yet a doctrine of this vast importance justly merited their most serious regard. But, that nothing might be wanting either to engage their attention, or to confirm their belief, God was pleased to exert himself in a miraculous manner, and to attest its truth by a special convincing sign. For what more proper, more convincing sign could they possibly have in proof of such a doctrine, than to see the Prophet translated alive^o before their eyes into that very state, the existence and reality of which he had just before revealed to them?

SUCH doctrine, one would think, supported by such evidence, would have borne down all opposition, and subjected the world to the authority of its dictates. But we have an instance now before us, that nothing is so forcible, interesting, and persuasive, but what the corruption and perverseness of man can withstand and reject.

ⁿ *Ecclesiast.* xliv. 16.

^o *Gen.* v. 24. *Heb.* xi. 5.

For

the Old-Testament Miracles. 19

For this abandoned race, deaf to these awakening calls, still continued obstinately wicked.

IN process of time, the posterity of *Seth*, forgetting the practice of their forefathers, and making alliances with the descendents of *Cain*, became infected with the same contagion of profaneness and immorality, and at length degenerated so far, that all sense of the true religion was extinguished among them^p.

THUS the whole race of mankind fell away from their allegiance to God, into an universal licentiousness and depravation of manners. "The wickedness of man was
"great in the earth, and every imagination
"of the thoughts of his heart was only
"evil continually^q."

WHAT particular crimes this general description was meant to comprehend, we have no certain grounds to determine. It is not improbable, however, that, when they lost the knowledge of the supreme, invisible Being, they addressed their devotions to those visible objects, with whose

^p *Joseph*, *Antiq. Jud.* lib. I. cap. iii. § 1.

^q *Gen.* vi. 5.

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appearance they were most affected, and by whose influence they were most benefited. This, we are sure, was the case of the world in future times; which is no small presumption that it was the case in the present. Some indeed have endeavoured to establish this opinion on the authority of scripture¹. But, whether the scripture countenances it or not, certain it is, the earliest records of heathen antiquity speak full to the point. For *Sanchoiathon* expressly affirms, that “in a time of great
“drought *Cain* and his wife lifted up their
“hands, and prayed to the Sun, whom
“they looked upon as the sole God and
“Sovereign of heaven.”

¹ Gen. iv. 26. יהוה בשם לקרא — id est, tunc profanatum est in invocando nomine *Jehovæ*. Profanari autem in invocando nomine *Jehovæ* idem est, ac si dixisset Moyses, sacrosanctum illud nomen, quod totius universi Creatorem ac Dominum designat, rebus creatis impie tributum. *Seld. de Diis Syr. prolegom. cap. iii.*

² Ex ἱερῶν ἵνα γενομένης κληθῆναι Γενος καὶ Γενίαν, — αὐχμῶν δὲ γενομένην, ἵνα χεῖρας ἀρῇεν εἰς θρανὸς πρὸς τὸν ἡλίου. ἱερὸν γὰρ φησι, θεὸν ἐνομιζόν μόνον θρανὸν κυρίου, Βασιλεῖαν καλῶντες. Apud *Euseb. Præparat. Evangelic. lib. I. cap. x.*

That by Γενος and Γενίαν our Author means *Cain* and his wife, Bishop *Cumberland* has proved at large in his Remarks on *Sanchoiatho*, p. 219, &c.

SOON

SOON after, it seems, the like worship was addressed by their posterity to the several Parts of Nature: to the Heavens, Moon, and Stars¹; to Fire, Air, and Wind²; to the Earth, Trees, and Water; to Beasts, Birds, and Reptiles. All these indeed are not distinctly specified as objects of their adoration: many however are; and all, I think, implied. For, when we are assured “they deified the plants of the “earth³,” we can hardly doubt of their advancing the other parts of the universe to the like honour.

IN consequence of this worship, the arts of magic and divination were studied and practised⁴, and superstitious, obscene rites instituted and solemnized. These detestable rites of their religion naturally led them to all the excesses of outrage and

¹ Ουσις δὲ, ἡλιος, καὶ σελήνη, καὶ ἄλλοι λοιπὸς πλανήτας ἀστέρων, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα συναφῇ, θεῶν μόνων ἐγνώσκον. *Phil. Bybl. apud Euseb. Præp. Ev. lib. I. c. ix.*

² Ἀνέρωσαι δὲ δύο τῆρας πύρι τε καὶ πνεύματι, καὶ προσκυνῆσαι. κ. τ. λ. *Sanchon. ap. Euseb. Præp. Ev. lib. I. c. x.*

³ Ἀλλ’ εἰσὶν οἱ πρῶτοι ἀφιερῶσαι τὰ τῆς γῆς ἐλάσματα, καὶ θεῶν ἐνομίσαν, καὶ προσκυνῆσαι ταῦτα. κ. τ. λ. *Idem apud eund.*

⁴ Ὡς δὲ λέγον τῶν Χερσὼρ λόγος ἀσκησάτω, καὶ ἐπὶ δαίμονας, καὶ μάγισσας. *Ibid.*

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violence^z, of luxury and wantonness^a in civil life. At length, the same impious principles and practices gained admittance into the other line; where they spread and prevailed with fatal success, to the utter extirpation of all truth and morality.

SUCH was now the state of mankind. When "God looked upon the earth, he found them all gone out of the way; they were altogether become abominable^b." Noah, indeed, still preserved his integrity, and stood, amidst the general corruption, a singular example of true piety and virtue^c. This distinguished behaviour entitled him to distinguished favour. But how were the rest to be dealt with? Can we suppose that God, "who is jealous of his honour, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," would suffer them to proceed in their idolatry and wickedness without controul? Or, must we not rather conclude, that he would manifest himself in some extraordinary manner, to vindicate his own authority, and to restore the practice of virtue upon earth? As it is conso-

^z *Gen.* vi. 13.

^a *Euseb. Præp. Evan. loc. citat.*

^b *Psal.* xiv. 3, 4.

^c *Gen.* vi. 9.

nant to our notions of him to believe he would, so the scripture assures us he actually did, "bringing in the Flood upon "the world of the ungodly."

SHOULD you now ask, "Why God "made use of this, rather than any other "method?" the answer, I think, is easy: because it was the properest, and most conducive to the purposes of his providence. Idolatry, it is evident, could not be extirpated, piety and virtue could not be restored, till that incorrigible race was utterly destroyed. But the destruction of those impenitents, you will say, might have been accomplished by various other means, as well as by a deluge. Perhaps it might. But what if their destruction was not the whole intent? What if God had farther ends in view, respecting those who survived? How will matters stand then? It is no unreasonable supposition, this. For, as the sons of *Noah* had conversed a long time with that corrupt generation, and were perhaps, some of them, mar-

2 Pet. ii. 5.

ried

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ried into the apostate line^e; it is more than probable, that they were, in some degree, infected with the idolatrous principles, and vicious practices of the age^f. Had they continued in this disposition, the designs of Providence might have been utterly frustrated; and “the work of the LORD must have failed in their hands.” The security of religion therefore required, that the present manifestation should carry something in its nature and form, equally adapted to convince them of the falsity of those principles, as to deter them from the practice of those vices. Observe then, how well it answered these several purposes. As it was, in all likelihood, the prevailing opinion of those times, that the world was self-existent, independent, and eternal^g, so the Almighty, to shew that

^e *Ham* is supposed to have married *Naamah*, the sister of *Tubal Cain*. *Cumberland's Sanchoniatho*, p. 107.

^f *Cham*, filius *Noë*, superstitionibus illis et sacrilegis artibus infectus fuit. *Cassian. apud Kircher. Obelisc. Pamph. lib. I. c. 1.*

^g See the accounts of the ancient Cosmogonies, as they have been transmitted to us by *Eusebius*, *Præp. Evang. lib. I. c. x.* and *Diodorus Siculus*, *lib. I. & lib. II.* or as they have been collected more at large by the Authors of the *Universal History*, *Introduct. vol. I. p. 11, &c.*

he both made and governed it, did, as it were, unmake it again; inverting its laws, and abolishing its order. As we have some reason to believe, that Water and Air were their chief divinities^h; so we find, that God made them the chief instruments of his vengeance. As the Earth was perhaps esteemed the mother of the godsⁱ, — those animal, reptile, and vegetable deities, that subsisted on its surface; so the LORD destroyed the Earth and its products, together with every animal, such only excepted as were preserved in the ark for the restoration of the species^k. And, lest the sons of Noah should attribute this terrible execution to the agency and power of some false deity, God foretells them that himself would do it, and specifies the time and manner of it: “After seven days, behold I” — not any of your imaginary dei-

^h The ancient profane accounts, which we have of the formation of the world, represent these two elements as the principal agents in that operation. But what were supposed to give being to the other parts of the Universe, which were esteemed Gods, must of course be themselves esteemed the greatest Gods of all.

ⁱ *Tn μνημ.* *Diod. Sicul. Biblioth. Hist. lib. I.* Quis enim ambigat matrem Deum Terram haberi? *Macrob. Saturnal. lib. I. cap. xxi.*

^k *Gen. vi. 13. — vii. 21 — 23.*

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ties—but “ I JEHOVAH, do bring a flood
“ of waters upon the earth to destroy all
“ flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from
“ under heaven. Every thing that is in
“ the earth shall die.¹”

I HAVE no occasion to observe, for it is extremely visible, with what irresistible force this punishment of the wicked, by the very things wherein they had sinned, must operate on the minds of *Noah's* family, who were eye-witnesses of it: how it must awaken their attention; fill them with the most awful ideas of God's power and sovereignty; convince them of his aversion to sin, and abhorrence of its authors; and consequently deter them from the like provocations.

IF we limit the design of Providence in this tremendous event to the bare destruction of those who perished, I can see no good reason, I own, why the Deity should use such a complicated method, and summon all the elements to put it in execution; “ since, without these, they might
“ have fallen down with one blast, being

¹ Gen. vi. 17.—vii. 4.

“ persecuted

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“persecuted of vengeance, and scattered
“abroad with the breath of his power^m :”
much less can I account, why the earth was
demolished, and every living creature de-
stroyed. But, if we consider this wonder-
ful transaction as moreover intended to
correct the errors of them that were pre-
served, then all things will appear to have
been ordered and conducted according to
the rules of consummate Wisdom.

I SHALL leave this point upon these
reasons. What weight they carry, let others
judge. Candour will allow them what
weight they have.



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SECTION III.

Of the moral state of the world from the Deluge to the Departure out of Egypt, and the dispensations relative thereto.

WHEN Noah was landed on the present earth, and saw his piety rewarded with such an amazing instance of divine favour; there is no room to doubt, but that he made religion his chief concern, and zealously propagated it among his posterity. Those religious notions and customsⁿ, which his sons and their descendents carried down along with them into the several countries wherein they settled, are incontestable proofs of his care and diligence in this respect.

BUT, notwithstanding the severity of God in punishing the sins of the old world,

ⁿ Such as the notions of *Expiation* by *Sacrifice*; of a *Mediator* between *God* and *Men*, &c. the custom of *Sacrificing*; and the observation of the *Sabbath*, or keeping *holy* the *seventh* day, &c.

and

and the industry of *Noah* in providing for the instruction of the new; yet mankind in a short time degenerated again, and sunk apace towards the same state of depravation, that they were in before the flood. When, or where, the infection first broke out, we cannot pretend to say: but, if it began to spread, as some suppose it did, before the attempt of building *Babel*; then the confusion of tongues, which God introduced at that time, and the dispersion of the people consequent thereupon, was apparently the wisest and fittest means, that can possibly be imagined, to check the progress of the spreading contagion, and to prevent its communication from one part to another.

How far it answered this intent, the scripture does not inform us. That it was not absolutely effectual, is very evident: for the depravation, though it probably met with several checks, still grew and advanced; and error, superadded to error, so

^o *Philo Jud. de Confusione Linguarum. Tennison of Idolatry. Hutchinson's Account of the Confusion of Languages. Gen. xi. 1—9.*

^a *Barnes's Demonstration of true Religion, vol. II. p. 129.*

totally

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totally extinguished the light of truth, that, in the course of a few centuries, the world was universally overrun with idolatry¹.

THE species of idolatry, which they fell into, was precisely the same, as what the antediluvians were supposed to practise; and it is not unlikely, they fell into it by the same delusion. The grandeur of the universe, and the regularity of its several parts, struck them with admiration, and impressed on their minds the idea of divinity; whilst the benefits they received through their mediation and influence excited their gratitude to pay them adoration². Thus, the very means, which ought to have preserved them in the acknowledgement and service of God, by a perversion strange indeed, but too true, contributed to make them forget and renounce him!

WHEN mankind had, in this manner, excluded God from the government of the

¹ *Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. I. c. vii. § 1. Cumberland Orig. Gent. Antiq. p. 427.—de Leg. Patriarch. c. iii. p. 425.*

² *Diodor. Sic. Biblioth. Hist. lib. I. Laſtan. de Origine Erroris. Letters concerning Mythology, Let. xvii.*

world;

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world; was there not a necessity of some new measures to bring them back to a proper sense of his dominion and sovereignty? It is apparent there was: and accordingly we find, that he attempted their reformation at this time by a method no less wise than gentle. He called forth his pious servants, the Patriarchs; and, appointing them as public vouchers of his being and providence, sent them out to bear his name before the nations, and to instruct them in the ways of truth and righteousness. Pursuant to this design, we meet these holy men, in the most renowned and conspicuous places^x, asserting his supremacy against all opposition^y; raising altars to the honour of his majesty^z; and invoking him in their solemn acts under the distinguished character of “the most high God, the Creator of heaven and

[†] Αβραμ—πρώτος τοῦ μαθεῖν ἀποφηνᾶσθαι δημιουργοῦ τῶν ὀλῶν
να. *Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. I. cap. vii. § 1. Vid. etiam*
Maimon. Mor. Nevoch. p. iii. c. 27.

^u *Gen. xii. 1, &c. — xxvi. 2, &c. — xxviii. 1, &c. —*
xxxv. 1 — 5. Psal. cv. 13 — 22.

^x *Chaldea, Canaan, and Egypt.*

^y *Joseph. Antiq. Jud. et Maimon. Mor. Nev. ubi supra.*

^z *Gen. xii. 7, 8. — xiii. 18. — xxvi. 25. — xxviii. 18, 19.*

earth.”

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“earth.” A conduct this, which could not fail of correcting the popular errors of the times, and bringing those with whom they conversed to a juster notion of God and his providence.

BUT, as the conversation of the Patriarchs brought the true religion to the knowledge of the nations, so did their felicity and marvellous successes recommend it likewise to their practice. For, since the people were every-where attentive to the concerns of this world, and eagerly ambitious of temporal grandeur, it was but natural for them, when they observed the prosperity of the worshipers of JEHOVAH, to make inquiry, what God he was that could confer such blessings; and what kind of services could procure and ascertain them—but natural for them to worship him too after the like manner, in expectation of the like rewards.

NOR is this only a specious surmise of what might possibly be, but rather a plain narration of what really was, the case. For several of the Eastern nations appear

* Gen. xiv. 22.

Heb. קנה שמים וארץ

LXX. Ὁς ἐνίκησεν τοὺς ἀστροὺς καὶ τὴν γῆν. Vid. Lud. de Dieu in loc.

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to have adopted the patriarchal rites^b, and to have reformed their religion to, what they thought, the patriarchal purity^c.

BUT, though the world was much enlightened by the intercourse and correspondence of these great reformers; yet, after their decease, the darkness of idolatry thickened again, and shortly covered the face of the nations^d. For we find the *Egyptians*, the wisest people then upon earth, and therefore, one should think, the last that would fall into such gross errors, entirely devoted, in the days of *Moses*, to the worship and service of material deities^e. And the *Israelites* themselves, who sojourn-
ed among them, notwithstanding the pro-

^b Is not Circumcision, which was practised by the *Egyptians* and *Ethiopians*, &c. a proof of this?

^c We are informed, that the name of *Abraham* was held in the greatest veneration all over the East; that the *Magians*, *Sabians*, *Persians*, and *Indians*, all gloried in him as the great reformer of their religion. See *Prideaux's* *Connect.* part I. b. iv. anno 486.

^d Sub ea tempora nox caeca et horribilis terrarum orbi incubuit, et idololatria (tquam *pestis in tenebris ambulans*) mortalium pene omnium animos pervasit. *Spencer de Leg. Hebr.* lib. I. c. i. § 1.

^e *Marsham.* Canon Chronic. in secul. ix.

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mises and seal of circumcision, were deeply tinctured with the same superstitions^f.

BUT, when this people, raised up on purpose to preserve religion, were thus in danger of being perverted from it, was it not highly necessary that God should interpose, and deliver them from the hands of their infectious masters? And, considering likewise the state of things, and the designs which Providence had in view, was it not equally necessary that the manner of their deliverance should be so contrived, as to convince them, and the rest of the world, that the notions they had imbibed were vain and erroneous, and the gods they adored false and imaginary?

Now, as these things were not only worthy of the divine cognizance in themselves, but seem, in their very nature, to require some proper provision to be made for them; so it is observable, that God, through the whole course of the succeeding manifestations, had a constant regard to them^g. For the chief intention, as the scripture

^f *Ezek.* xx. 7, 8. — xxiii. 3.

^g Cum id ageret Deus, ut populum ab Ægypti servitute liberaret; ita parata sunt omnia, ut Deus Israelis Ægypti deos

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scripture assures us, of his “ multiplying
“ those signs and wonders, both in heaven
“ above, and in the earth beneath,” was
to convince all—the *Israelites*^h, *Egyptians*ⁱ,
and the rest of the nations^k,—that “ the
“ heavens and the earth were the Lord’s,
“ and that he was the governor among
“ all people^l ;” or, in other words, that
“ he alone was the true God, and that
“ there was none else besides him.” How
properly these manifestations were adapted
to work such conviction, will, I hope, pre-
sently appear.

It is the fundamental principle of di-
vine government, to work upon rational
creatures in a rational manner. But the
most rational method of reclaiming men
from any errors, and of inducing them to
embrace the opposite truths, is, to make it
plain to their understanding, that things
are in fact otherwise than they apprehend ;

deos ludibrio exponeret, eosque, una cum cultu eorum;
vanitatis post natos homines maxime redargueret. *Spencer*
de Leg. Heb. lib. I. c. i. § 1.

^h *Exod.* vi. 7. — x. 2.

ⁱ *Exod.* vii. 5. — xiv. 4, 18.

^k *Exod.* ix. 16.

^l *Psal.* xxii. 28.

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and to render them sensible, that it were more becoming their nature, as well as more conducive to their happiness, to think and act differently for the future. Let us apply this to the present case.

MANKIND were not so depraved in their notions of the divine nature, but that they attributed to it as well the support and conduct of things, as the distribution of blessings and comforts: and so far they were certainly right. But then they falsely imagined, that the more illustrious, active parts of the Universe — the Sun, Stars, and Elements — completely answered all these characters. For, as they observed the course of things to be constantly regulated, and the blessings and calamities of life to be daily dispensed, by the motion and agency of these bodies; so they were led, by those appearances, to believe them to be the only gods that governed the world. Herein lay their fatal mistake. And how were they to be set right in this point? Was it not by convincing them, that these bodies had no other powers or qualities, than what they derived from their great Creator, whose instruments they were in carrying

rying on the purposes of his providence? And what properer method could the Deity make use of to form this conviction, than that of empowering some distinguished person to alter or suspend the qualities of such bodies, and make them operate, by his bare command, in direct opposition to their ordinary course?

THIS was to appeal to their own notions; to make them sensible in their own way, that he alone was the governor of the world: and that all visible beings were but so many subordinate agents, working by his power, and under his direction; and consequently that he alone was intitled to the worship and obedience of men, as he alone could reward or punish them.

Now, as such a process was most aptly accommodated, in the reason of things, to the circumstances and apprehensions of mankind; so, in the case of the *Egyptians*, the Deity, we find, proceeded accordingly; exerting his power in appropriated instances, which equally served to demonstrate the nullity of the gods they worshipped, as to punish the crimes they had been guilty of in consequence of that worship.

BUT,

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BUT, to set this matter in a clear light, it will be necessary to take a particular view of the progress and conduct of the whole procedure.

IN the first place, then, JEHOVAH, by a message in his own name, required the *Egyptians* to release his people^m. The *Egyptians* disclaimed all knowledge of him, and disdained to yield obedience to him. "Who is JEHOVAH," replied *Pharaoh*, "that I should obey his voice to let *Israel* go? I know not JEHOVAH, neither will I let *Israel* goⁿ." They had Gods of their own — Universal Nature, and its several Parts^o—who, they thought, could

^m *Exod.* v. 1.

ⁿ *Exod.* v. 2.

^o They worshipped the *Universe* under the name, First, of PAN: παρ' Αιγυπτίοισι δὲ, Παν μὲν, αρχαιοτάτῳ, καὶ τῶν ὀκτῶ τῶν πρώτων λεγομένων θεῶν εἶναι. *Hérodote. Euterp.* cap. cxlv.

Πανα καλῶ κρατερόν — κοσμοῖο το σύμπαν,

Ουρανον, ἠδὲ θαλάσσαν, ἰδε χθονα παμβασίλειαν,

Καὶ πυρ ἀθάνατον· ταδε γὰρ μέλη ἐσὶ τα Πανός.

Orph. Hym. in Pan.

Secondly, of SERAPIS: Nam Serapis, quem Ægyptii deum maximum prodiderunt, oratus a Nicocreonte Cypriorum rege quis deorum haberetur, his versibus folicitam religionem regis instruxit :

could act as powerfully in their behalf, as JEHOVAH could do in behalf of the *Israelites*. In these therefore they trusted, and upon these they depended.

THIS then was the proper time to convince them of their folly, or to punish their stubbornness, if they proved incorrigible. But God, foreseeing what the consequence would be, and unwilling, as it were, to enter on the methods of severity, commanded his servants to go again to *Pharaoh*, and repeat the demand of his dismissing the *Israelites*. Upon this second application, the King required them to exhibit some miracle, as a proof that JEHOVAH was really God, and that they were charged with his commission.

"Aaron," in compliance with that request, "threw down his rod before *Pharaoh*, and before his servants, "and it became a Serpent";" which, in their hieroglyphical theology, was the

Εἰμι θεός· τῶνδε μαθεῖν, οἷον κ' ἐγὼ εἶπω·
Οὐρανὸς κόσμος κεφαλὴ, γῆς τε δὲ θάλασσαν,
Γαῖα δὲ μοι πόδες εἰσι, τὰ δ' αὖτ' ἐν αἰθερὶ κείται,
Ὅμματα τε τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμπρὸν φῶς ἡλίου.

Macrob. Saturnal. lib. I. c. xx.

P *Exod.* vii. 10.

emblem

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emblem or representation of the supreme God¹. Hereupon the magicians or priests of *Egypt* were called to confront him; who were no sooner come, but they threw down every man his rod, which became in like manner serpents²; emblems or symbols of their supreme divinities³. Thus far both parties exhibited equal signs of power. But the superiority soon appears: for “*Aaron’s rod swallowed up all the rods of the magicians*.” An evident prognostic this, of the event of the ensuing contest; wherein *Jehovah* vanquished

¹ Ετι μνηοι Αιγυπτιοι απο της αυτης εννοιας τον κοσμον γρα-
φοντες, περιφερη κυκλον αποειδη και τυρωτον χαρυσσον, και
μεσσην τεταμμενοι οφιν ιερακομορφον και ες το παν σχημα, ως
το παρ ημιν θηται τον μεν κυκλον, κοσμον μνησυιες, τον δε οφιν
συνεκτικον τετον, αγαδον δαιμονα σημανοντες. *Euseb. Præp.*
Evang. lib. I. c. xx. sub fin.

² That the Rods of the magicians were turned into real Serpents, as well as the Rod of *Aaron*, is evident from the express words of the history. As it is said of the rod of *Aaron*, לַחֲנֹק לַיְהוָה so it is said of the rods of the magicians — לַחֲנֹק לַיְהוָה. Compare *Exod. vii. ver. 10 & 12.*

³ Και τα μεν πρωτα στοιχεια τα δια των οφειν, ναυς κατα-
σκευασαμενοι, εν αυτοις αφιερωσαν, και τεταται δυσιας και εορ-
τας επιτελων και οργα, δεας της μεγαλυς νομιζοντες και αρχη-
γος των εθν. *Euseb. ibid. Vide etiam Justin. Martyr.*
Apolog. 1. et Spencer. de L. Heb. lib. II. c. xxi. §. iv.

¹ *Exodus vii. 12.*

and

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and destroyed all the gods of *Egypt* in reality, as he did here in symbols.

THIS miracle making no impression on the minds of *Pharaoh* and his subjects, God then proceeded to exert his power in still more awakening miracles; such as not only proved that he was "God of gods, "and Lord of lords;" but also shewed, "that his power and his wrath is against "all them that forsake him."

THESE miracles may, with some propriety, be divided into four classes; as being transacted in the four Elements, which were their four principal Deities.

Let us consider them in their order: for there is plainly a regular order, and a just gradation, observable in them.

I. THE *Egyptians*, 'tis well known, held Water in high veneration^x, and more especially the river *Nile*^y. This was the

^v *Ezra* viii. 22.

^x *Ægypti incolæ aquarum beneficia percipientes, aquam colunt, aquis supplicant, aquas superstitiosa votorum continuatione venerantur. Jul. Firmic. de Error. prof. Relig. Vid. etiam Phil. Jud. de vita Moysi, lib. I. p. 617.*

^y Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔγωγε τιμῇ Αἰγυπτίοις ὡς ὁ Νεῖλος. *Plut. de Is.*
& *Of. § 5.*

H

fruitful

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fruitful source of their choicest blessings, and thence became the chief object of their religious worship. For, as their daily sustenance was, in a great measure, owing to its bounty, (its water being their common drink, and its fish their common food^z;) so were they careful in paying it their daily devotions. If then they were to be convinced that God “is wonderful in the “waters”; that *that* river in particular was his^a; and that they ought to be thankful to him for it: surely his depriving it of all its utility, destroying its fish that they might not eat them, altering its water that they could nor drink it^b, was no

^z *Herodot.* Euterp. c. lxxvii. *Diodor. Sic. Bibl. Hist.* lib. I. p. 32.

^a The present King of *Egypt* might perhaps imagine, with the same arrogance as one of his successors afterwards did, — see *Ezek.* xxix. 3. — that this River was so peculiarly and emphatically his *own*, that it was not in the power of any God to dispossess or deprive him of its benefits.

^b *Philo*, Vit. *Mosis*, lib. I. p. 617, seems to intimate, that the fish became immediately unfit for use; their nutritive property being instantly changed into another of a most pestiferous nature. And *Josephus* says, that the water was not only of the colour of blood, but that it brought great pains and bitter torments upon those who ventured to drink of it. *Antiq. Jud.* lib. II. c. xiv.

unlikely

unlikely means to work that effect. And since they were so barbarously superstitious in their devotions to this river, as to stain its current with human sacrifices^c, his "turning its water into blood" was but a just and suitable punishment for such bloody cruelties^d.

THEN again; as the banks of the river was the grand scene of their magical operations^e, in which blood and frogs made the principal part of the apparatus^f; so, by commanding it to produce such an infinite multitude of these creatures to annoy them^g, he adapted their chastisement to the nature of their crimes. Adapted it, I say, with wonderful propriety: since frogs were not only the instruments of

^c The *Egyptians*, in antient times, used annually, at the opening the canals, to sacrifice a girl, or, as others say, a boy and a girl, to the *Nile*, as a tribute paid to that river for all the benefits they received from it. See the *Universal History*, vol. I. p. 178 and 212, and the Authors there referred to.

^d *Exod.* vii. 19, 21. *Rev.* xvi. 5, 6.

^e Targum *Jonathan Ben-Uziel* in *Exod.* vii. 15.

^f *Maimon. Mor. Nev.* p. iii. cap. xlvi. *Spenc. de Leg.* Heb. lib. II. c. xv. § 1. *Horat. Epod.* v.

^g *Exod.* viii. 5, 6.

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their abominations, but likewise the emblems of those impure dæmons, whom they invoked by their incantations ^h.

II. THE Earth was another object of their worship ⁱ, to which they addressed their solemn devotion, and offered the first products of the year ^k, as the donor of their corn, grain, and fruit, and the author of their sustenance. To make them therefore sensible that the Earth did not put forth those life-sustaining productions (for which they adored it with mistaken gratitude) by an independent virtue of its own, but only in consequence of the divine establishment; to make them sensible of this, I say, God reversed the nature

^h Rev. xvi. 13.

ⁱ Θεὸς δὲ ὅτι τὰς αὐτὰς ἀπαντὲς ὁμοίως Αἰγυπτίοις σέβονται, πλην Ἰσίδος τε, καὶ Οὐσίριος—τὰς δὲ ὁμοίως ἀπαντὲς σέβονται. *Herod. Eut. cap. xlii.*

Ἰσίδος σῶμα Γῆν ἔχουσι καὶ νομιζέσθαι. *Plutarch. de Isid. et Os. § 38.*

^k Κατὰ τοὺς θερισμοὺς τὰς πρῶτας ἀμνηδέντας σαχὺς δέντας τὰς ἀνθρώπους, κοπείσθαι πλησίον τοῦ δραγματος, καὶ τὴν Ἰσὶν ἀνακαλεῖσθαι καὶ τὰτο πράττειν ἀπονέμοντας τιμὴν τῇ Θεῷ τῶν εὐρημένων κατὰ τοὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῆς εὐρέσεως καιρὸν. κ. τ. λ. *Diod. Sicul. Bibl. Hist. lib. I. p. 13. Vid. etiam Euseb. Præp. Ev. lib. III. cap. xi. sub fin. et Spencer. de Leg. Heb. lib. III. cap. ix.*

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of its productions; causing it “to bring forth lice throughout all the land¹.” Before, they were nourished by what the earth produced, now, they are devoured by it.

“AND because they had gone astray so very far in the ways of error, as to hold the cattle of the field^m—yea, noisome beasts, reptiles, and insectsⁿ—for gods;” therefore the former were killed by a murrain^o, and a mixture^p of the latter was sent to torment them^q; “that they might know, that wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished^r.”

III. THE Air was another of their chief divinities^s; to whom they attributed the

¹ *Exod.* viii. 16, 17.

^m *Cicero de Natur. Deor.* lib. III. *Laëtan.* lib. V. c. xx.

ⁿ *Wisdom* xi. 15.

^o *Exod.* ix. 3 — 6.

^p *Heb.* עֶרֶב. If you chuse rather to interpret this word of the *Cynomya*, or *Dog-fly*, then the infliction is justly applicable to a particular branch of their superstition, and that is *Dog-worship*:

Oppida tota Canem venerantur. — *Juv.* Sat. XV.

^q *Exod.* viii. 21 — 24.

^r *Wisdom* xi. 16.

^s Τὸν δ' Ἀέρα προσάγορευσαι φασὶν Ἀθηναί, μαδερμαγενομένης λέξεως. κ. λ. τ. *Diodor. Sicul. Bibl. Hist.* lib. I. p. 12. Vid. etiam *Euseb. Præp. Evang.* lib. III. cap. ii.

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salubrity of their climate, and the healthfulness of their own constitutions'; and whose benevolence therefore they studied to engage by the offerings of daily incense". To convince them of the falsity of this notion; to shew them, "that God alone woundeth and healeth, killeth and maketh alive;" he changed the qualities of the Air, and rendered it pestilential, exciting inflamed tumors, and virulent ulcers in man and beast, throughout all the land of *Egypt*^x. And if you suppose this painful infliction to affect more particularly the inguinal parts^y, we may then conclude it to be farther intended as a just punishment of those lascivious practices, and abominable impurities, to which the nation was horribly addicted^z.

^t *Herodot.* Euterp. c. lxxvii.

^u *Plutarch.* de Isid. et Osir. § 80.

^x *Exod.* ix. 10. *Phil. Jud.* de vit. *Mos.* lib. I. p. 622.

^y Vid. *Schindler et Castel.* in Radice בָּעֵרָ.

^z Haud dubie *fornicandi* verbum, ut passim, ad idololatricam refertur: ita tamen, ut simul alludat ad Ægyptiorum libidines impurissimas—*Horresco referens!* In parte hircini cultus id fuit, quod quædam mulieres, tanquam religione addictæ, sacris scilicet hircis fœde se submittebant. *Bochart.* Hieroz. p. I. lib. II. c. liii. Vide *Herodot.* in secundo libro passim. See *Levit.* xviii. 23, 24. — xx. 15, 16, and *Patrick's* Comment, on the place.

THE

THEN again; as they ascribed the exuberance, growth, and maturity of all vegetable productions to the influence of this divinity, the Air; so the Lord strengthened that element to reprove their error^a, and caused it to produce such dreadful storms of rain, hail, thunder, and lightning, as had never been known since the foundation of *Egypt*^b; whereby the greatest part of the herbage and fruit was blasted and destroyed. And afterwards the East Wind^c, which they likewise adored, conveyed a large flight of locusts to devour the remainder^d.

IV. THE supreme objects of their worship were the Sun, Moon, and Stars^e.

^a *Wisd.* xvi. 24.

^b *Exod.* ix. 22 — 25.

^c *Heb.* דְּקֵרָה דְּקֵרָה. LXX. Ανεμος ο νοτος. But whether it was the East or South Wind, it makes no difference with regard to the propriety of the miracle; for the *Egyptians* worshipped all the four Winds.

^d *Exod.* x. 12 — 15.

^e Τες δ' ἐν κατ' Αἰγυπτίον ἀνδρωπες το παλαιον γενομενες, αναβλεψαντας εις τον κοσμον, και την των ολων φυσιν καταπληγοντας τε και δαυμασαντας, υπολαβειν ειναι δυο θεας αιδιες τε και πρωτες, τοντε ηλιον και την σεληνην, ων τον μεν Οοριον την δε, Ισιν ονομασαι. *Diodor. Sicul. Bibl. Hist. lib. I. p. 10. Edit. Hanov. 1604. Porphyry, apud Euseb. Præp. Evang. lib. III. cap. iv.*

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JEHOVAH therefore, to demonstrate his superiority over these exalted parts of nature, suspended their lights and emanations, and covered all the land of *Egypt* with thick darkness for three days^f.

To these miracles, in proof of his power and sovereignty, God superadded one more, as a demonstration of his providence. For the death of every first-born^g of the *Egyptians* in so lively a manner represented, and bore so natural a relation to their sin, in destroying every male of the *Israelites*, that they must needs perceive it was inflicted as a punishment for that very cruelty^h; and consequently must conclude, that this God of *Israel* took particular cognizance of human transactions, and, sooner or later, rewarded every man according to his works.

SUCH were the miracles performed in *Egypt*; and such the purposes intended by them. And, when viewed in this light, how judiciously do they appear to be ac-

^f *Exod.* x. 21 — 23.

^g *Exod.* xii. 29. The reason why the *first-born* of cattle were likewise destroyed, may perhaps be this, viz. that they were sacred to the gods.

^h *Wisd.* xviii. 5. *Burnet's Demonstration of true Religion*, vol. II. p. 189.

commodated,

commodated, in their nature, to the apprehensions of the people, and the points in controversy? Nor is the manner in which they were wrought less worthy of our admiration; since it was so calculated, as to obviate every objection which their prejudices might suggest, and to forward every good emotion which their reflections might inspire. For, in the first place,

As the *Egyptians*, who had very high notions of the art of sorcery, might imagine that *Moses* performed these miracles by some fascination¹; therefore, the magicians were suffered to try the utmost of their power in the imitation of them: But they tried in vain. Their acknowledged inability, therefore, to equal and imitate them, proved they were not the effects of magic, but the works of God*. And, though these detestable seducers had so far imposed upon the people, as to make them believe that they could, by their incantations, secure both their persons and properties from all kinds of evil¹; yet how

¹ *Origen contra Celsum*, lib. III. *Philo Jud.* de vit. Mos. lib. I.

* *Exod.* viii. 19.

¹ *Maimon. Mor. Nevoch.* p. III. c. xxxvii.

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must even the meanest capacities be now convinced of the falshood and vanity of such deceits, when they saw the magicians themselves equally involved in the common calamities ^m? And this, it should seem, the historian has been careful to record, lest the children of *Israel* should afterwards be seduced by the like pretensions.

MOREOVER, the *Egyptians* were forewarned of the day when every plague should befall them ⁿ; and permitted to assign their own time when they would have them removed ^o: whereby they might plainly see, that God alone was the author, both of their sufferings and deliverances; and that no planetary aspect (for they thought the stars governed the world ^p) was so favourable or malign, but that he could afflict, or relieve them, at what time soever he pleased.

^m *Wisd.* xvii. 7, 8.

ⁿ *Exod.* ix. 5, 18. — x. 4.

^o *Exod.* viii. 9, 10.

^p Magna fuit temporibus illis in stellis fiducia, adeo ut crediderint, vitam & mortem, omne item bonum vel malum, ab illis, stellis inquam, promanare. *Maimon. Mor. Nev.* p. III. c. xxxvii. *Porphyr.* apud *Euseb.* Præp. Evang. lib. III. c. iv.

BESIDES,

BESIDES, these miraculous judgments came upon them by leisurely advances; and proper intervals of respite were allowed them to consider and reflect upon what had been done; “that, seeing by their punishment wherein they had offended, they might return from their wickedness, and believe on the Lord.”

AND lastly, to convince them that the God, who wrought these wonders among them, was the God of *Israel*, he made a visible distinction, through the course of his procedure, between the two nations; and, while the land of *Egypt* was afflicted with these plagues, the land of *Goshen*, where the *Israelites* dwelt, remained free and unmolested¹. From whence they might easily draw this farther conclusion; that he was as gracious to the faithful and obedient, as he was terrible to the rebellious and ungodly.

Now, if these rational methods of conviction could not prevail on the obstinacy of the *Egyptians* to repent of their wick-

¹ *Wisdom* xii. 2.

² *Exod.* viii. 22. — ix. 4, 26. — x. 23. — xii. 13. *Phil. Jud.* de vit. *Mos.* lib. I. p. 624, &c.

edness, and to let *Israel* go; what else can be expected, but that God, in justice, should suffer their crime to become their punishment; and leave them “to eat the bitter fruit of their own ways, and to be filled with their own devices?” Accordingly, when they pursued after the *Israelites*, with infatuated resolution, into the midst of the sea, God, who was in no wise bound to preserve his enemies by a miracle, permitted the sea to return to its strength, and overwhelm them all.

“THUS the LORD got him honour up-
“ on *Pharaoh*, upon his chariots, and up-
“ on his horsemen” — and likewise upon his gods^x; whom, according to the custom of those antient times, it is probable, he carried in the front of his army^y.

I NEED not observe, what awful impressions this amazing judgment must fix on

^a *Prov.* i. 31.

ⁱ *Exod.* xiv. 27, 28.

^u *Exod.* xiv. 18.

^x *Numb.* xxxiii. 4.

^y Familiare fuit idololatriæ antiquioribus, iter præsertim suscepturis, aut cum hoste congressuris, idola parvula secum ferre; ut itineris socios, pugnaq; duces atque auspices haberent deos tutelares, iisque præsentibus cultum exhiberent. *Spencer. de Leg. Heb. lib. III. cap. iii. § 1.*

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the minds of the several nations who heard the fame of it; and how forcibly it must convince them, that the God who could do such mighty wonders, must be the only great and true God.



SECTION



SECTION IV.

Of the moral state of the world from the departure out of Egypt, to the end of the Babylonish captivity, and the dispensations relative thereto.

THOUGH the children of *Israel* now believed, that their great Deliverer was the true God^a, and that he alone “was worthy to be praised;” yet, as their superstitious prejudices were deeply rooted, the utmost precaution was still necessary to keep them from falling off. Had they been allowed to converse familiarly with the neighbouring nations, or had they been conducted immediately into the land of *Canaan*, the very sight of the heathen worship would have rekindled their fondness for it, and have led them away to the practice of it.

^a *Exod.* xiv. 31.

To guard them therefore from the contagion of ill examples, God wisely carried them into a desolate wilderness; where they saw such continued instances of his power and goodness, as equally served to supply their wants, and to strengthen and confirm their faith^b.

As they knew not the way through that pathless desert, and were in danger of being devoured by wild beasts^c; his *shechinah*, or miraculous presence, went before them, to guide and protect them in all their journies^d. “He spread out a cloud “for a covering; and fire to give light in “the night-season^e.” When they grew thirsty, and had no water to drink, “he “brought streams out of the rock, and “caused rivers to run in dry places^f.” When they were oppressed with hunger, and had nothing to eat, “he sent them “flesh in abundance, and filled them with

^b Deut. viii. 2, 3.

^c Deut. viii. 15.

^d Exod. xiii. 21, 22. Deut. i. 31, 33, and Patrick's Commentary on the first of these texts.

^e Psal. cv. 39.

^f Psal. lxxviii. 16. Exod. xvii 6. Numb. xx. 8—11.

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“the bread of heaven^s.” And, that they might not perish by cold and nakedness, he preserved their garments fresh and untireⁿ. And lastly, to render them equal to the difficulties of their marches, he kept their feet from swelling, neither were their shoes waxen old¹.

^s *Psal.* cv. 40. *Exod.* xvi. 12 — 15. *Numb.* xi. 7, 31. Though the primary intention of this miracle of the *Manna* was to supply the want of provision, which the *Israelites* then laboured under; yet was there another purpose, which it was plainly designed, and excellently adapted, to answer. The people were at this time commanded to keep holy the sabbath-day, and to rest thereupon from all their works. This command, from the severity of the penalties annexed to the breach of it, appears to have been of great importance: and yet they were, it seems, but ill disposed to observe it. It was necessary, therefore, they should be thoroughly convinced, that it really was a divine command. To work this conviction then, God sent them on the sixth day a double portion, but on the sabbath there was none to be found. And tho’ on the other days, what remained until the morning became corrupt, and bred worms; yet the *Manna*, preserved for the use of the sabbath, kept sweet and good through the course of that day. Now, what could be a plainer proof, that this sabbatical rest was of divine injunction, than the periodical cessation of a miracle on that very day? And what stronger inducement could they have to the punctual observance of it, or what clearer evidence of the necessity of so doing, than to observe in God himself an example of obedience to this great command?

ⁿ *Deut.* xxix. 5.

¹ *Deut.* viii. 4.

THE paternal care, displayed in these miracles, must, one would imagine, effectually engage their gratitude to God, "who had done such great things for them;" and invariably fix them in a dutiful obedience to all his laws: laws, that were, most of them, attended at their delivery with glorious and majestic wonders, equally calculated to prove their divinity, as to secure them respect and attention^k. But alas! their propensity to idolatry was so very strong, that no miracles could set them right. And therefore the Deity detained them in the wilderness, till the old generation was quite extinct^l, and a new generation had sprung up, that knew no other God but him, whose wonders they daily saw, and were indebted to for their continual support; and, consequently, a generation that was not so liable to be seduced into the superstitious errors and customs of the nations.

WHEN God had thus raised up proper inhabitants for the land of promise, his miraculous providence conducted them to

^k *Exod.* xx. 18—20. *Deut.* iv. 10, 11.

^l *Numb.* xxvi. 64, 65.

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it, and gave them possession of it. Here again, the measures, by which the conquest of this country was atchieved, were planned by divine Wisdom in an excellent manner towards promoting his grand design; I mean, the establishment of true religion, and the extirpation of idolatry: inasmuch as they tended to fill the nations with astonishment^m, to imprint on their minds high conceptions of the majesty and greatness of JEHOVAHⁿ, and to make them sensible of the sin and folly of trusting in any other God but him. This is visible in every atchievment; but more especially, in the circumstances of that memorable victory obtained by *Joshua* over the five confederate kings^o.

ALL nations had at this time their several tutelary deities, to whose protection they committed themselves and their country^p, and to whose power they imputed their successes in war. Now, the three principal deities, whom the inhabitants

^m *Josh.* v. 1.

ⁿ *Josh.* ix. 9.

^o *Josh.* x. 1 — 14.

^p *2 Kings* xvii. 26. — xviii. 33. — xix. 12.

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of *Canaan* adored, were the Sun, Moon, and Heavens, or Air^q. To convince them therefore, that the gods, in whom they trusted, were subject to the God of *Israel*; and to punish them, at the same time, for the false worship they paid them; “ the
“ Lord showered down great hailstones^r
“ from the heavens, or air, which flew
“ vast numbers of their powerful army;

^q They worshipped the Sun under the name of *Baal*, *Beelsamen*, and *Moloch*. *Seld. de Diis Syr. syntagm. I. c. vi. & syntag. II. c. i.* And the Moon under the name of *Astoroeth*. *Idem, synt. II. c. iii.* They worshipped likewise the whole frame of Heaven, and all its host, as appears from *Jer. vii. 18.* — *xliv. 17. marg.* and *Deut. iv. 15, 19.* For, as the latter is a caution to the *Israelites* against their falling into the practices of the *Canaanites*; so the former is a description of the practices they afterwards learnt of them.

^r *Josh. x. 11.* Whether this was a shower of large hailstones, or of real stones falling as thick as hail, is a matter of some dispute. The original text is capable of either sense. But, in which sense soever you take it, the miracle is equally great, and its application equally pertinent.

If, in another battle, the Stars in their courses fought against *Sisera*, *Jud. v. 20.* — and the Heavens by a like storm contributed to overthrow his army, *Joseph. Ant. Jud. lib. V. c. v. § 4.* — then both the *Canaanites* and the children of *Israel* had a second proof, that God “ acteth according to his will among the hosts of heaven, as well
“ as among the inhabitants of the earth.”

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“ and then stopped the two great Lumina-
 “ naries in their course ;” which gave the
Israelites time and opportunity to complete their victory over the remainder.
 And God, it should seem, inspired the
Hebrew General to call for this miracle
 “ in the sight of *Israel*,” to deter them
 from falling into the like idolatry ; from
 “ kissing their hands,” according to the
 old superstitious form, “ when they be-
 “ held the sun as it shined, or the moon
 “ walking in its brightness.”

IT may be thought perhaps, that the
 whole motive, which induced *Joshua* to
 put up his prayer for the prolongation of
 the day, was only his zeal and eagerness
 for gaining an intire conquest over his
 enemies. This indeed may be allowed to
 be one motive ; but, I should judge from
 the circumstances of the narration, neither
 the only one, nor the chief. The mere
 finishing such a conquest seems to be
 scarce a sufficient ground for so extraordinary
 a petition. But admit it was ; yet

* *Josb.* x. 12.

† *Job xxxi.* 26, &c.

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how came he to make it at such a time? For, when this request was made, the greatest part of the enemy was destroyed, and the rest put to the rout: the day was but half spent, and the sun in the meridian^u. What is there now in the nature of these circumstances, that could prompt him to call for such a miracle? He had time sufficient before him, in all probability, to accomplish his desires: or, if he found the victory unexpectedly retarded, would it not have been soon enough to petition for a longer day, when he saw the sun in its declension, and near its setting?

THESE considerations therefore induce me to conclude, that this wish or prayer of *Joshua* was rather the effect of divine inspiration, than the result of his own reflections; and that the chief purport of this miracle, exhibited in answer to it, was to convince both armies, and all who observed it, that “the gods of

^u For the original words are — “So the Sun stood still
“ בַּחֲצִי הַשָּׁמַיִם in the *midst* of *heaven*, or in the *mid-*
“ *heaven*; and halted not לָבוֹא to *go down* or *decline*
“ about a whole day.” *Josb. x. 13.*

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“the heathens were but idols; and that it
“was the Lord, who made and who go-
“verned the heavens.” Others perhaps
may be otherwise minded. Let every
one judge as he finds reason.

WHAT influence these wonderful ma-
nifestations had upon the *Canaanites*, we
know not. They wrought, however, most
powerfully on the *Israelites*; and, as ap-
pears from their conduct on the supposed
defection of some of their brethren, changed
their propensity to idolatry into an utter
dread and detestation of it. Happy would
it have been, had they always continued
in this disposition, which the law and
its promises had a peculiar tendency to
cultivate and maintain. But their zeal
gradually abated, and expired at last in a
shameful, universal apostasy. They spared
the nations, whom they were command-
ed to destroy; “and, mingling among
“them, served their idols, and learned
“their works.”

^x *Psal.* xcvi. 5.

^y See *Josh.* xxii. 11—31.

^z *Judg.* ii. 10—13.

^a *Psal.* cvi. 34, 35. *Judg.* iii. 5—7.

HERE

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HEREUPON, “ the anger of the LORD
“ was kindled against his people, inso-
“ much that he abhorred his own inhe-
“ ritage. He gave them over into the
“ hands of the heathen, who grievously
“ oppressed them, and had them in sub-
“ jection ^b.” Nevertheless, when they re-
turned unto him, “ he regarded their
“ affliction,” and raised up judges to be
their deliverers ^c. But they were no sooner
rescued, than they lapsed again, and
again experienced the same calamities ^d. So
that this period, and indeed the whole
time to the *Babylonish* captivity, was an al-
ternate succession of sinning and repentance
on the part of the people, and of favour
and severity on the part of God. But
these “ differences of administration” want
no explication. The intention of Provi-
dence appears plain in every step; and the
propriety of his measures may be discerned
by every eye. For the wonderful preser-
vation of the *Israelites*, when obedient, and
their no less wonderful punishments, when

^b *Psal.* cvi. 39—41. *Judg.* ii. 14, 15.

^c *Judg.* iii. 9, 15. — iv. per tot. — viii. 28. — xi. 33.

^d *Judg.* ii. 18, 19.

disobedient,

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disobedient, were evident proofs, both to themselves and the nations around them, that their God was the only Lord and Governor of the world.

BUT, as the false prophets with continued endeavours laboured to pervert them from this belief; so the prophets of God, on every revolt, were equally industrious to reduce them to it. With this view were many miracles performed. But there is one more eminently remarkable than all the rest, which deserves our particular consideration: and that is the miracle of *Elijah*, in his contest with the priests of *Baal*.

THE children of *Israel*, in the reign of *Ahab*, partly seduced by the persuasion of their Priests, and partly compelled by the rigour of their King, forsook the commandments and religion of God, and devoted themselves to the worship of *Baal*; or, to put it most favourably, divided their service and obedience between them. Now, *Baal*, which signifies *Lord*, and is a name common to all the gods, is to be understood here in a more especial manner

manner of the Sun^e: to whom altars were raised, and chariots and horses dedicated^f; and whom the people, it seems, now looked upon, if not (like the *Phœnicians*) “as the sole lord and sovereign of heaven,” yet at least as co-partner with *JEHOVAH* in the government of it.

* Deinde, ut fit corruptis moribus et in superstitionem pronis, Solem forte primo, quem *μᾶρον ἡγάσαντο* *ἥσαν*, id est, *solum in cælis deum*, putabant *Phœnicii*, sub hoc nomine (*Baal*) venerabantur. — De *Phœnicio Belo* capiendâ sunt quæ habes 1 Reg. cap. xvi. 2 Reg. cap. x. ubi rex *Achab* in foci gratiam, *Ithobalis* inquam, *Sidoniorum* regis, fanum in *Samaria Baali* sacrâsse memoratur. *Seld. de D. Syr. syntag. II. c. i.*

Some, I foresee, will object, and some, I know, have objected to this interpretation, that there are certain properties, such as *sleeping*, &c. attributed to *this deity*, which can by no means be applied to the *Sun*. But the *Stars*, it should be remembered, were thought to be *animated*. Vide *Maimon de Fundamen. Legis, c. iii. § 11.* And why might not the *Israelites* entertain the like notions of *their* God, the *Sun*, that the *Phrygians* and *Paphlagonians* did of *theirs*, the same *Sun*; whom they imagined to lie *sleeping*, and to be kept in hold, all the winter, and to *awake* only, and to be set at liberty, in the summer? See *Plutarch de Ifid. et Osir. § 69.*

^f These altars, chariots, and horses are said to be consecrated by the *kings of Judah*, 2 Kings xxiii. 11, 12. But I make no doubt, that *Abab*, in imitation of the *Sidonians*, had done the same before them, tho' it be not particularly mentioned of him — nor is it indeed mentioned of *them* in the account of their respective lives.

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IN this situation of things, *Elijah*,
 “jealous for the Lord God of hosts,”
 desired *Abab* to convene *Israel* and all the
 Priests at mount *Carmel*: which being ac-
 cordingly done, he came unto the people,
 and said — “How long will ye halt be-
 “tween two opinions? If *JEHOVAH* be
 “God, follow him: but if *Baal*, then
 “follow him.” “But, that ye may per-
 “ceive which of them is really God,
 “we’ll put them both to the trial. You,
 “that are his prophets, maintain, that
 “*Baal*—the Sun—is the true God. The
 “essence of the Sun is fire: and surely,
 “if he can display himself in any thing,
 “it must be in *that*. Be *that* then the
 “test.” “The God that answereth by
 “fire, let him be God.”

THIS was a rational method of deter-
 mination; adequate and suitable to the
 point in controversy; and therefore what
 the people could not but approve. The
 proposal being thus assented to, the priests
 of *Baal* prepared their sacrifice; “and

2 *1 Kings xviii. 21.*

called

“ called on the name of their God from
 “ morning even until noon — nay, un-
 “ til the evening : but there was no voice,
 “ nor any that answered, nor any that
 “ regarded ^h.”

THEN *Elijah*, having so disposed and
 ordered his sacrifice, as to prevent all suspi-
 cion of deceit ⁱ, came up to the altar, and
 prayed unto the Lord, that he would shew
 himself to be the only great and true God :
 which he had no sooner done, but a fire
 fell down from heaven, and consumed the
 victim, wood, and stones; and dried up
 all the water in the trench. “ When the
 “ people saw it, they fell on their faces,
 “ and cried out — JEHOVAH, he is the
 “ God ! — JEHOVAH, he is the God ^k !”
 And so fully were they convinced of this
 truth, that they instantly seized on the
 prophets of *Baal*, and, at the command
 of *Elijah*, put them all to death. In a
 short time after, all his worshippers met
 with the same fate ; and *Baal* himself was
 destroyed out of *Israel* ^l.

^h 1 *Kings* xviii. 26, 29.

ⁱ *Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. VIII. c. xiii. § 5.*

^k 1 *Kings* xviii. 39.

^l 2 *Kings* x. 25, 28.

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As their frequent defections exposed the *Jews* to frequent calamities; and more especially to the incursions, fury, and oppression of their enemies; so they were very apt to ascribe those calamities, notwithstanding the contrary declarations of their prophets, to the superior power of the national divinities; and, in consequence of that imagination, to forsake their own God in such distresses, and to adopt the deities of their conquerors. Something therefore seems to be necessary to correct this dangerous notion, and to assure them, that God was always able, and always ready, to protect and deliver them, if "their sins" "did not withhold such mercy from them." Now God, we find, was not wanting in this respect: for there are several miracles, which appear admirably adjusted to this purpose, and were evidently wrought with this intent. Let it suffice to mention that one, exerted in defence of *Jerusalem*, when it was besieged by *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*.

THIS Prince, flushed with his victories, and breathing destruction against the king-

Isai. l. 1, 2. — lxx. 1, 2.

dom

dom of *Judah*, which had then withdrawn its allegiance from him, sent an opprobrious message to *Hezekiah* and his subjects, charged with the most bitter invectives, not only against the king, but even against God". Read his own words. "Thus saith the great king, the king of *Assyria*: 'What confidence is this wherein ye trust? If ye trust in God, and say unto me, The LORD will deliver us; hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of *Assyria*? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver *Jerusalem* out of mine hand?'"

HERE, you see, he brings down the great GOD of *Israel* to the contemptible level of the gods of the nations; puts him to open defiance; and charges him with impotence to his face. This then was the time for the LORD to vindicate his honour; to assert his supremacy and power; and to make both parties sensible, that he

2 *Chron.* xxxii. 15—17.

2 *Kings* xviii. 33, 35.

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was "glorious in might; equally able to
 "help and to cast down, to save and to
 "destroy." Accordingly, this blasphemous
 tyrant had scarce advanced to the
 holy city, but his forces were instantly
 broken. "For it came to pass that night,
 "that the angel of the Lord went out,
 "and smote in his camp an hundred
 "fourscore and five thousand men." This
 tremendous act forced him to retreat
 with shame and confusion; and made it
 visible to all the nations, especially to the
 Jews, that JEHOVAH was a God "mighty
 "in strength, and excellent in power;"
 that he was truly, what he styled himself,
 "the LORD of hosts;" and that "there
 "was no other god, that could deliver
 "after this sort."

Thus

2 Kings xix. 35.

2 Chron. xxxii. 23. *Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. X. c. i. § 4.*

Dan. iii. 29.

The miraculous destruction of the army of *Ben-hadad* was wrought, as the scripture informs us, with the
 same view. "Thus saith the Lord — Because the *Syrians*
 "have said, The Lord is God of the *hills*, but he is not
 "God of the *valleys*; therefore will I deliver all this
 "great multitude into thine hand; and ye shall know that
 "I am the Lord." *1 Kings* xx. 28. Accordingly, great
 numbers of them fell by the sword in the plain of *Aphak*;
 and

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THUS it appears with what propriety of wisdom this miraculous interposition was exerted and applied, not only to the relief of the people's distresses, but also to the correction of their errors.

BUT these were not the only errors incident to this people, that required the correcting hand of Providence, or indeed employed it. The *Jews*, like other nations, under the infatuation of idolatry, "deemed "the Heavens, Stars, and Elements, to be "the only gods that governed the world". And as they believed that the fertility of the earth, the salubrity of the seasons, and the prosperity of all human affairs, depended on the favour of these deities; so, in hopes of partaking of those blessings, they zealously engaged in their worship and service'. To convince them therefore of the falsity, and to recover them from the influence of this persuasion, God disposed the whole process of his admini-

and the rest, who escaped into the city, were crushed to death in so extraordinary a manner by the tumbling of the walls, as clearly shewed, that God himself was immediately concerned in their destruction.

¹ *Wisdom* xiii. 2.

² *Jer.* xlv. 17—19.

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stration in direct opposition to it: inflicting calamities, where their principles led them to expect blessings; and shedding blessings, where they dreaded calamities. This is the reason, that their defections were attended with such wonderful scenes of adversity". This is the reason, that we never read of their following idols, but we likewise read of the heaven's becoming dry, the earth unfruitful, the seasons unhealthy, or the state unsuccessful *.

THERE is a remarkable passage in the second chapter of the prophecy of *Hosea*, which may serve to illustrate and confirm this point. There God charges the *Israelites* by the mouth of his prophet, as with

" " Because ye have burnt incense, &c. therefore this " evil has happened unto you." *Jer.* xliv. 23. See also *Deut.* xxviii.

" Invenies passim in Lege, quod ex cultu Stellarum sequatur cohibitio pluviae, vastatio terrae, corruptio temporum, agritudo corporum, decurtatio dierum (h. e. *vita*); et e contra, quod ex intermissione illius, et conversione ad cultum Dei, sequatur descensio pluviae, fecunditas terrae, bona tempora, sanitas corporis, et longa vita, contra quam hominibus concionati sunt cultores idolorum, ut ad colenda ea ipsos promoverent. Fundamentum enim Legis est, opinionem illam ex animis hominum tollere, memoriamque ejus extirpare. *Maimon.* Mor. Nov. p. III. c. xxx.

idolatry

idolatry in general, so more particularly with that provoking instance of it, the attributing their prosperity to the beneficence of their idols. "Their mother hath played
" the harlot: she that conceived them
" hath done shamefully: for she said, I
" will go after my lovers, that give me my
" bread and my water, my wool and my
" flax, mine oil and my drink. For she
" did not consider, that I gave her corn,
" and [wine, and oil, and multiplied her
" silver and gold, which she prepared for
" *Baal*!"

HAVING thus described the nature of their sin, and laid open the source from whence it sprung; he threatens to reduce them to a state of adversity, as the most likely means to convince them of their errors, to bring them to a due sense of things, and reclaim them to the practice of their duty. "Therefore will I return,
" and take away my corn in the time
" thereof, and my wine in the season
" thereof, and will recal my wool and
" my flax, which I gave to cover her

7 Ver. 5, 8.

M

" nakedness.

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“ nakedness. And then shall she say, I will
 “ go and return to my first husband, for
 “ then it was better with me than now.”

SUCH chastisements indeed opened their eyes, and convinced them, at the time, of the folly of their doings. “ But their
 “ hearts were not yet whole with God;
 “ neither continued they stedfast in his
 “ covenant.” For, as soon as the smart of these slighter corrections was over, they constantly fell back into their old superstitions, and provoked him again with the same abominations. This then shews the necessity, and justifies the severity of still harsher dealings. And therefore, when
 “ their iniquities were full,” he totally withdrew his protection from them, and delivered them to a long and grievous captivity; which at last completed the workings of the preceding administrations, and cured them at once of their idolatry and unbelief. Whether the hardships of their slavery under the *Babylonians*, the monstrous variety of superstitions they beheld

* Ver. 9, 7.

* *Psal.* lxxviii. 37.

among them, or the continued exhortations of their prophets, contributed most to this extraordinary change, is quite uncertain. But this, however, is very plain; that, one way or other, they were perfectly reformed before their return; and have maintained, ever since, an inviolable attachment to the true God.

Now, though the Deity, throughout his dispensations, seems most attentive to the conversion of the *Jews*; yet it is manifest, from the tenor of his proceedings, that he was not regardless of other nations. Several instances have already occurred of his general concern for all mankind; and several more might be produced of his particular regard to the gentiles: What are all the exhortations and warnings delivered by the Prophets to the surrounding nations, but so many instances of this truth? But why do I mention these? For what was there done, of any moment, towards the conviction of the *Jews*, that did not extend, and proportionably contribute to the reformation of the *Gentiles*? The miracles wrought in *Egypt* were such as the

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whole world had a concern in, and such as the whole world either beheld or heard of. The wonders afterwards performed in *Canaan* “declared the glory of God to “the heathen, and manifested his power “to numerous people.” He discovered himself to the *Syrians* both by goodness^b and severity^c; and the *Assyrians* likewise were eye-witnesses of his majesty^d. Then, the miracles displayed in *Babylon*^e made him known, not only throughout the province, but even through the whole extent of that mighty empire. In short, his name “went forth into all the earth, and “his words unto the ends of the world^f.” And this was followed with so great success, that we read of “devout men,” that is, worshippers of the God of *Israel*, met together at *Jerusalem*, “out of every nation “under heaven^g.”

THIS was the great and gracious end which the Almighty seems to have had

^b 2 *Kings* v. 8—19.

^c 1 *Kings* xx. 28, 29.

^d 2 *Kings* xix. 35.

^e *Dan.* iii. 29. — vi. 25—27.

^f *Psal.* xix. 4. *Rom.* x. 18.

^g *Act.* ii. 5.

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in view in his several transactions with mankind; and therefore, when he had thus redeemed them from their "bondage" "to the elements of the world," and had brought them to the obedience and acknowledgement of himself, he withheld his hand for a time, and closed up this stupendous dispensation.

SECTION



SECTION V.

The Conclusion.

WE have now seen for what design miracles were originally introduced, and in what manner they were all along applied. If we consider of what infinite importance that design was to the happiness of mankind, we shall soon perceive, that it was in no wise unworthy of God to interpose, by such extraordinary acts, for the accomplishment of it. And, if we consider farther the propriety of the acts themselves, and their united tendency to that effect, we shall find reason to conclude, that they could be the product of no other agency than his, who is alone
 “excellent in counsel, as well as mighty
 “in work.” For this system of miracles, constantly varying with every variation of circumstances, and yet regularly operating to one great and beneficent end, exhibits

as

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as clear a manifestation of the agency of the Deity, as the system of nature does. Indeed, "most of these amazing works were so near akin to the works of the creation, that, by a just comparison, they might be known to come from the same hand^a." For who, but the Author of nature, could order, vary, and controul the course of nature in so extraordinary and surprizing a manner?

If the Deist therefore, who admits the world to have been at first created, and to be still supported, by God, will be true to his principles, he must admit likewise, that the *Jewish* dispensation was at first planned, and all along conducted, by the same wise and powerful Being. For, upon what grounds, let me ask him, does he believe the world to be the workmanship of God? Is it because he observes such traces of wisdom in the disposition of its parts, such instances of power in the execution of the whole, as no other Being could exert or display? Then, is he not bound, for the same reasons, to believe the divinity of the Old Testament? For,

^a Bishop *Sherlock's* Discourses, Vol. I. Disc. X. p. 283.

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if the works of nature are acknowledged to be sufficient to prove that God is the author of nature, surely the miracles of the *Jewish* religion, which are works of the same kind, and effects of equal power, must be acknowledged as sufficient to prove God the author of that religion. This conclusion he cannot, I think, evade; unless he should assume the boldness to reject all the miracles as false and fictitious. But the necessity of them for the accomplishment of the end designed, the probability they derive from the circumstances under which they are recorded, and the general harmony that runs through them, clear them from all suspicion of that kind; and, at the same time, inseparably connect them with the natural state of the world.

AND herein the miracles of the Old Testament are constitutionally distinguished from the miracles recorded by heathen authors. For, as these are useless and unmeaning, incoherent with themselves, and unconnected with the rest of the facts; so they may be safely rejected, without any prejudice to the other parts of the history in

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in which they are contained. “ But the
“ scripture miracles make an essential
“ part of the several events related : they
“ are strongly connected with this great
“ history of providence ; and are indeed
“ the very means by which Providence
“ completed its gracious purpose. No one
“ can therefore reject these miraculous ac-
“ counts, without rejecting all the natural
“ events with which they are thus
“ intimately interwoven : and this he can-
“ not do, without destroying every re-
“ ceived principle of assent, and shaking
“ the faith of all antient history ⁱ. ”

ⁱ *Brown's Essays on the Characteristics, Essay III.*
Sect. iv. p. 292.

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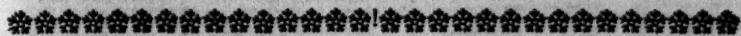


PART the SECOND.

THE I N T E N T A N D P R O P R I E T Y O F T H E

New - Testament Miracles

Considered and Explained.



THE N came the Jews round about him, and
said unto him, How long dost thou hold
us in suspense? If thou be the Christ,
tell us plainly.

J E S U S answered them, I told you, and ye
believed not: The works that I do in my
Father's name, they bear witness of me.

JOHN X. 24, 25.





PART the SECOND.

THE
INTENT
AND
PROPRIETY
OF THE

New-Testament Miracles

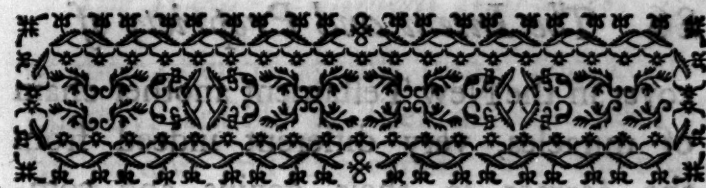
Considered and Explained.



Then came the Jews round about him, and
said unto him, How long dost thou hold
us in suspense? If thou be the Christ,
tell us plainly.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye
believed not: The works that I do in my
Father's name, they bear witness of me.
John x. 24, 25.






THE
INTENT
AND
PROPRIETY
OF THE
New-Testament Miracles, &c.



SECTION I.

*Of the moral state of the world at the time
of our Saviour's appearance. And of the
necessity of a new Revelation.*

E have already seen the nature,
intent, and propriety of that
extensive chain of miracles,
which runs through the Old
Testament. If we pursue the progress of
the divine administration, we shall dis-
cover

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cover in the New Testament another chain of miracles, very different indeed from the former in their genius and complexion, but equally suited to accomplish the design they were intended to serve. For those were not more properly adapted to prove, that JEHOVAH is the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the world; than these are to prove, that JESUS CHRIST is the promised MESSIAH, the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind. — But not to advance too abruptly: let us still keep in view the state of the world, and consider things in their regular order.

THOUGH the preceding dispensation, as it reclaimed them from idolatry, and brought them to the acknowledgment of the true God, did, in a great measure, lessen the misery of mankind; yet was it defective in several particulars necessary to perfect and complete their happiness. For, as soon as they became acquainted with God^a, they became likewise sensible

^a Though the necessity of a new revelation is here chiefly deduced from the condition and circumstances of the *Gentiles*;

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of their offences against him ; and, consequently, sensible of their absolute need of his pardon and forgiveness. But the assurance of his pardon they could no otherwise obtain than by an express declaration from himself : and, as such a declaration had not been made to the whole world before, it was therefore the first thing which the circumstances of their condition now required.

BUT suppose this necessity supplied ; suppose that God, overlooking those times of ignorance, had declared his forgiveness of their past sins ; yet, what would that avail, unless they understood how to serve him acceptably for the future ? And how was it possible for them to understand this, unless he gave them such a perfect and complete rule of life, as would infallibly direct them to all those duties which he required of them ? Such a rule then was the next thing they stood in need of, as a necessary guide in the ways of godliness.

tiles ; yet, if we reflect a little on the corrupt state of religion among the *Jews* at this time, we shall soon be convinced, that *they* stood in almost equal need of the same instruction, with respect to the following articles.

BUT

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BUT admit that such a rule was accordingly delivered to them; yet the experienced weakness of their nature would soon convince them of their inability to follow it. And then, what signified the rule, unless they were also supplied with an addition of strength, sufficient to enable them to obey its directions? This therefore was another thing indispensibly requisite towards the attainment of felicity.

BUT suppose likewise, that they were accordingly endowed with this necessary addition of strength; yet, as the allurements of sense continually led them to misapply their abilities, and the sanctions of nature were too light to counter-balance the influence of those allurements; so they had great need of some weightier motives to determine and bind them invariably to their duty—motives sufficient, as well to deter them from the pursuit of vice under its most engaging appearances, as to animate and excite them to the practice of virtue under the most pressing discouragements. But such motives could only be derived from the clear prospect of another life, in which they were to partake of happiness

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happiness or misery to all eternity, according as they discharged or neglected their duty. That prospect therefore the security of their welfare required to be cleared and laid open to them.

BUT still, as the bulk of mankind had no conception of being happy or miserable hereafter, but in the same bodies they possess here, which yet they observed to be destroyed by death^b; so it seems to be moreover necessary, to give those motives their full weight, that proper assurance should be conveyed to the world of a general resurrection to come; when every soul was to be clothed again with its own body, to receive the things done in that body, whether they were good or evil.

SUCH then, and so many things were

^b In terram enim cadentibus corporibus, hisque humo testis, e quo dictum est *humari*; sub terra censebant reliquam vitam agi mortuorum.—Tantumque valuit error, ut, corpora cremata cum scirent, tamen ea fieri apud inferos fingerent, quæ sine corporibus nec fieri possent, nec intelligi. Animos enim per seipsoſ viventes non poterant mente complecti: formam aliquam figuramque quærebant. *Cicero Tusculan. Quæst. lib. I. § 16.*

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necessary to the happiness of mankind,
which the *Jewish* religion left unsupplied.

BUT however, though that religion
neither took in the world in general, nor
could make even those, "that did the
"service, perfect;" yet it supported the
faithful with repeated promises all along,
that these defects would be amply made
up by the coming of that Prophet, whom
God had determined to send forth, in the
fulness of time, to be the Saviour of the
world. Now, this being the case, if any
Person should ever make his appearance
under the character of that Prophet, as
the end of his mission necessarily requir-
ed that he should fulfil the divine
promises in this respect, so the truth of
it must of course depend upon the cer-
tainty of his so doing. And therefore all
claims to that title are best determined by
this rule.

OF the several Persons who assumed to
themselves the character of the MES-
SIAH, JESUS of *Nazareth* is the only
one, whose claim deserves our regard. This

man, if it be lawful to call him a man, made a very extraordinary figure in the world. For he opened a new scene of things; performed many wonderful works; and established another institution of religion, which pretends to supply all the deficiencies of the former dispensation, and to administer every thing, in abundant measure, that pertaineth to life and godliness.

THESE are such important and interesting pretensions, as render the Gospel highly worthy of our most serious consideration. Let us then proceed to examine its contents, and see how far it answers these pretensions. And here the whole of our Inquiry may completely be reduced to these two heads :

“ I. WHETHER the doctrines of the
“ Gospel do in fact assert, that JESUS
“ CHRIST has supplied the world with
“ all those means, which we have before
“ adjudged to be necessary to salvation ?”

And, if so,

“ II. WHETHER the miracles there-
“ in recorded do sufficiently prove, that

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"he was able to perform what his doctrines asserted?"

If these points appear upon examination to be well grounded, and firmly supported, there can be no doubt, but **CHRIST** was "that Prophet that should come into the world;" and the Gospel is that perfect institution, by means of which mankind may attain to eternal salvation; "being thoroughly furnished," and effectually encouraged, "unto all good works."

John vi. 14.

"I. We have seen that the Gospel doth not only declare that Christ has saved the world with all those means which we have before adjudged to be necessary to salvation. And so, we have seen the miracles there-
" in recorded do sufficiently prove, that

SECTION II.

Of the connection between the doctrines of Christ and the moral exigencies of mankind: and of the analogy between his miracles and his doctrines.

WHEN JESUS CHRIST entered upon his ministry, he declared, in conformity to the character he had assumed, that the great purpose and design of his coming was "to redeem and save sinners": "that whosoever believed in him might not perish, but enjoy everlasting life."

Now, the first thing, as we observed above, necessary to the salvation of sinners, was the assurance of pardon and forgiveness. Agreeably heretunto, the Gospel informs us, that John the Baptist was sent before "to prepare the way of the Lord, and to give knowledge of salvation

Matth. xviii. 11. Luke ix. 56. Tim. i. 15.

John iii. 16.

" unto

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“unto his people by the remission of
“their sins.” And when the Lord him-
self, who was to take away the sins of
the world, made his appearance, he not
only published a general declaration of par-
don upon the condition of repentance;
but he also forgave some faithful peni-
tents their sins in form^b, as an earnest or
pledge of what he promised to do for all
others, who were equally qualified.

THIS, you will say, was a joyful
introduction: a declaration suitable to the
wants, and adequate to the wishes of
mankind. But could they with safety de-
pend upon it? Was there any security, that
JESUS was possessed of the power he
claimed? any certainty, that the sins he un-
dertook to forgive were indeed forgiven?
Certainty, you will find, or security enough
to give rest and peace to the most anxious
mind. For what is it to forgive sins?
Is it not to deliver from those effects
which sin produces, or to which it ren-
ders

^f Luke i. 76, 77. “Lord, and to give knowledge of salvation
* Mark i. 14, 15. Luke xxiv. 47. Acts xiii. 38.

^b Matth. ix. 2. John v. 14.

ders the sinner obnoxious? But the primary effects and consequences of sin were diseases and death. And then, what can be conceived a plainer proof of the actual forgiveness of sins, than to behold sinners relieved of their diseases, and freed from the jaws of death, at the instant they were pronounced so forgiven? This proof J E S U S gave them: for “he healed
“all manner of sickness, and all manner
“of disease, among the people¹.”

B U T this evidence may be placed in another light: and in that light, perhaps, it may appear stronger.

C E R T A I N diseases, such as leprosy, palsy, madness, and blindness, were denounced by the Law^{*}, and esteemed by the *Jews*¹, as punishments for certain sins. Now, if the accession or infliction of these diseases was a sure token, as it really was, of God's displeasure against such sinners, was not the sudden removal, or miraculous cure of them as evident a token of his forgiveness? Suppose you were

ⁱ *Matth.* iv. 23. ix. 35.

^{*} *Deut.* xxviii. 15, &c.

¹ *Luke* xiii. 2, 4. *John* ix. 2.

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to see an imprisoned malefactor eased of his chains, and set at liberty before your eyes, could you possibly doubt of his having received the King's pardon? But, what the release of this prisoner would be to us, the same were the cures, which **J E S U S** wrought on those sinners^m; to the *Jews*—visible instances of the remission of their punishments, and therefore the properest and most convincing proofs of the remission of their sins.

NOW, that these sanative miracles of **CHRIST** were destined in their intention, as they were adapted in their constitution, to prove the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, is evident from several passages of Scripture; and more particularly from one in the Gospel of St. *Matthew*, which comprehends the sum of all that can, or need be said in confirmation of this point. The passage I mean is in the ninth chapter, and runs thus:

^m *Lepers* cleansed, *Matth.* viii. 2, 3. *Luke* xvii. 12—19. *Paralytics* cured, *Matth.* viii. 6. ix. 2, &c. *Lunatics* or *Mad* cured, *Matth.* iv. 24. xvii. 15, &c. *Blind* restored to sight, *Matth.* ix. 27—30. xx. 30—34. *John* ix. 1—7.

“ They

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“ They brought to him a man sick of
“ the palsy, lying on a bed: and J E S U S,
“ seeing their faith, said unto the sick of
“ the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins
“ be forgiven thee. And behold, certain
“ of the Scribes said within themselves,
“ This man blasphemeth. And J E S U S,
“ knowing their thoughts, said, Where-
“ fore think ye evil in your hearts? for
“ whether is easier to say, Thy sins be
“ forgiven thee? or to say, Arise and
“ walk? But, that ye may know that
“ the Son of man hath power on earth^a
“ to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick
“ of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed,
“ and go unto thine house. And he
“ arose, and departed to his house. And
“ when the multitude saw it, they mar-
“ velled,” that is, were convinced, “ and
“ glorified God, who had given such
“ power unto men^b.”

BUT this doctrine of the forgiveness
of past sins, however clearly proved,

^a And, if he had this power *now*, in his state of humilia-
tion on earth; much more must he be supposed to have
it *afterwards*, in his state of exaltation in heaven.

^b Ver. 2—8.

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could afford mankind but little comfort, unless they practised for the future what was lawful and right. But alas ! they were not able, in numberless instances, to discover what the right was : and therefore they wanted, in the next place, such a perfect and complete rule of life, as would faithfully direct them, in all occurrences, what to do, and what to avoid, in order to secure the favour of God, and render themselves acceptable to him. Now such a rule the Gospel supplies : not only as it teaches men, in general, “ to live soberly, “ righteously, and piously in the world, “ and, denying all ungodliness and hurtful “ lusts, to cleanse themselves from all fil- “ thiness both of flesh and spirit^p ;” but also as it lays down particular precepts for the discharge of those several duties, to which they are bound in their several relations. These precepts neither had, nor wanted the support of any miracles ; being sufficiently evidenced by their conformity to the dictates of right reason, and the constitution of human nature. Practice, in

^p *Tit.* ii. 12. *2 Cor.* vii. 1.

this

this case, was the best proof. For what our Saviour affirms of the doctrinal part of his religion is equally true of the preceptive: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself^a."

Now, though they could not but acknowledge that this revealed law was a good and perfect rule of life; yet the weakness of their nature, the perverseness of their passions, and the opposition of Satan, rendered them unable to obey its directions, and live up to the measure of its obligations. Hence, therefore, it appears necessary, that Christ, as the Author of salvation, should deliver them from this bondage of corruption, and supply them with such an addition of strength, as might enable them to withstand the assaults of the Tempter, and subdue every irregular passion to the obedience of the Gospel. Accordingly, he promised to free them from this body

^a *John* vii. 17.

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of sin, to strengthen the infirmities of their nature, and to render them superior to all opposing difficulties¹.

AND what he so promised, he gave them full proof he could likewise perform. For could they doubt, whether he, who could rescue them from the possession of Satan², could also defend them against his assaults? Could they doubt, whether he, who could rectify the crookedness of the body³, could also rectify the perverseness of the mind? Or, whether he, who could strengthen them in the outward man⁴, could also strengthen them in the inward?

BUT his ability in this respect was not only evidenced by these remoter analogous instances, but moreover exemplified in the actual manifestation of the genuine promised effects. For his followers, in consequence of their master's promise, were

¹ *John* i. 12. *Rom.* viii. 1, 2 — 38, 39.

² *Matth.* viii. 28, &c. — ix. 32, &c. — xii. 22, &c. xvii. 14, &c. *Mark* i. 23, &c. iii. 11. — v. 2 — 15. vii. 24, &c. ix. 17, &c. *Luke* iv. 33, &c. viii. 26, &c. ix. 38 — 42. xi. 14, &c.

³ *Luke* xiii. 11 — 13.

⁴ *Matth.* xv. 30, 31.

renewed

renewed in the dispositions of their minds, and transformed into quite different creatures. They no longer lived the rest of their time in the evil practices of the world, but walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They abounded in all the fruits of righteousness, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they shone as bright and glorious lights. And though they were obliged to "wrestle
"not only against flesh and blood, but
"against principalities, against powers, a-
"gainst the rulers of the darkness of this
"world, and against spiritual wickedness
"in high places^x; yet in all these things
"they were more than conquerors thro'
"him that strengthened them."

AND, as the promise was not solely made to them, but also, in consideration of the like necessity, to their children after them, "and to all that were afar off,
"even as many as the Lord our God
"should call^y;" so the life and conver-

^x *Ephes.* vi. 12.

^y *Acts* ii. 39.

sation of every sincere and pious christian is a visible demonstration, that Christ still abides with his church², and continues to impart the same succour and assistance, in the necessary proportion, to all its members.

BUT, notwithstanding mankind were thus enlightened with the knowledge of their duty, and strengthened likewise with abilities to perform it; yet, as they were bound to refrain from many things which appeared desirable, and to embrace as many that were very grievous to flesh and blood; so it was moreover necessary, that some powerful motives should be laid before them, to incline and determine them to act accordingly — motives sufficient, as well to deter them from the pursuit of vice under its most engaging appearances, as to incite them on to the practice of virtue against the most pressing discouragements. Now, such motives Christ proposed, and laid before them. For he assured them, that this life was to be succeeded by another, in which he should

² *Matth. xxviii. 20.*

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pass sentence upon them according to the nature and quality of their actions^a. Those who did well, and persevered in their duty, he promised to reward with eternal felicity; but the wicked and rebellious he threatened to punish with everlasting destruction.

NOR was there wanting sufficient evidence both of the certainty of his promises, and the reality of his threatenings. For what can be more evident, than that he, who was able to blast and destroy by the word of his mouth, to strike offenders dead by the ministry of his servants, in this present world^b, must be likewise able to take vengeance on them in that future world, of which he is equally the

^a 2 Pet. iii. 1 — 13. Luke xii. 4, 5. Matth. xxv. 31 — 46.

^b The only instance which our Saviour exhibited of his power to *curse* and *destroy*, was that *inoffensive*, but *significant* one, displayed on the barren fig-tree. Matth. xi. 18, &c. Mark xi. 12, &c. More instances of the vindictive kind would have been at that time prejudicial to his doctrine. But, when the truth of the Gospel was sufficiently proved, he impowered his disciples to punish offenders in a miraculous and exemplary manner. See Acts v. 1 — 11. xiii. 8 — 12.

Lord

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Lord and Governor? What can be more evident, than that he, who was able to support the weary multitudes, and relieve their hunger with food, in the wilderness^c, must be able also to satisfy the righteous to the extent of their desires, and fill them with all spiritual comforts, in heaven?

BUT why do I insist upon such proofs, when his power to judge the world was so visibly displayed, and the form of his proceedings so circumstantially represented, in the destruction of the *Jewish* nation?

He told them, before his death, that, as sure as the *Jewish* polity should be destroyed, and the inhabitants of *Judea* should be visited for their iniquity; so surely should the frame of the universe be dissolved, and the inhabitants of the

^c *Matth.* xiv. 15, &c. — xv. 32, &c. *Mark* vi. 35, &c. — viii. 1, &c. *Luke* ix. 12, &c. *Job.* vi. 5, &c.

The propriety of these miracles, and their application, will be more conspicuous, if we consider, that the happiness and comforts of another life are represented in scripture by those enjoyments and satisfactions which make men easy in this. Heaven is described as a place, “where they shall *hunger* no more, neither *thirst* any more: for Christ shall *feed* them, and shall lead them unto *living fountains of water*.” *Rev.* vii. 16, 17.

earth

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earth be summoned to judgment^d. One part of this prediction has been already fulfilled; and that in so extraordinary a manner, as plainly shewed it to be the work of CHRIST^e. The other therefore will be fulfilled in its season—the time determined by the Father. And when that determined time is come, can it ever be doubted, but that he, who, in this judicial manifestation, made such an apparent difference between the believing and unbelieving *Jews*, will also, in that future determination, of which this was the emblem, make the like distinction between the righteous and the wicked; between them that served him in fear and reverence, and them that despised and transgressed his laws?

BUT nevertheless, as the generality of mankind had no idea of being happy or miserable in a future state, but by the means of these bodies they have in the

^d See *Matth.* chap. xxiv.

^e The interposition of a divine power was so clearly visible in the overthrow of *Jerusalem*, that *Titus* himself ascribed his taking that city to the assistance of *God*. Vid. *Joseph. de Bello Judaic.* lib. VI. c. ix. § 1.

Q

present,

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present^f, which yet they observed to be destroyed by death; and as it appears but reasonable, that men should partake of the fruit of their actions in the same compound nature in which they had acted; so it seems to be moreover necessary, to inforce the doctrine of a general judgment, that CHRIST should assure them of a general resurrection; when the dead shall be ransomed from the power of the grave, and become again the same individual men. Accordingly he told them in express terms, that “the hour
“ is coming, in which all that are in
“ the graves shall hear his voice, and
“ shall come forth^g.” And need I prove that the voice of CHRIST is such a powerful voice? The dead have proved it long ago—who felt its quickening energy in the grave, and rose up to attest its efficacy^h.

^f See Bp. *Sherlock's* Discourses, vol. I. disc. vi.

^g *John* v. 28, 29.

^h *Matth.* ix. 24, 25. xxvii. 52, 53. *Mark* v. 35—43. *Luke* vii. 11—15. viii. 49—56. *John* xi. 43, 44.

SINCE

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SINCE then he has given us already such convincing proofs of his power to deliver from the dominion of death, both by raising himself and others; we may rest assured, that "his wonders shall once more be shewed in the grave, and his faithfulness in destruction." And although the worms destroy these bodies, yet, as we know that our Redeemer liveth, we may still be confident, that in our flesh we shall see God^k.

SUCH is the provision, according to the Scripture account, which CHRIST has made for the happiness and salvation of mankind. And, pray, what is there wanting in this account to complete his character, as the promised MESSIAH, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world? Was he to make an atonement to God for us? Behold then, "he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification^l." Was he to supply us with the necessary means of salvation? Then be-

^l *Psal.* lxxxviii. 11.

^k *Job* xix. 26.

^l *Rom.* iv. 25.

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hold them all contained in the Gospel. Did the whole world stand in equal need of these benefits? Behold then, he commissioned his disciples to convey and propose them to all nations^m. And, lastly, that they might be able to execute the commission they received, behold them endowed with the gift of languages, and “speaking with other tongues, “as the Spirit gave them utteranceⁿ.” Thus commissioned, and thus impowered, “they went forth, and preached every- “where; the Lord working with them, “and confirming the word by signs “following^o.”

^m *Matth.* xxviii. 19. *Mark* xvi. 15, 16.

ⁿ *Acts* ii. 4.


^o *Mark* xvi. 20.





SECTION III.

The Conclusion.

E have now seen the nature and design of the christian religion: how necessary it was for the recovery of mankind; and how fully it answers that intention. We have seen likewise the evidence by which it is supported: how wisely the miracles are adapted to the doctrines; and how clearly they prove their truth and certainty.

HERE then let us pause a little—and ask ourselves, “what stronger proofs could we possibly desire in confirmation of this religion, than what the Gospel has offered?” It is attended with all the internal and external evidences that can be thought on. Its doctrines are not only correspondent to the necessities of human

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human nature, but also conformable to the highest human reason; and moreover stand attested by analogous examples and sensible demonstrations.

HAD the Gospel required of us to expect salvation by JESUS CHRIST, and given us no reason to think him equal to the mighty work, Infidels might then have laughed with assurance, and have justly reproached our faith as credulity. But now their reproaches be to themselves. It is our boast, as it is our happiness, that "we know in whom we "have believed:" even in him, "who is "able to save them to the uttermost, that "come unto God by him^p;" seeing he is the Lord of life and glory, and is invested with sovereign power both in heaven and earth^q, as he made appear by repeated exertions of it^r.

SINCE

^p Hebrews vii. 25.

^q Matth. xxviii. 18. John iii. 35.

^r The sovereign power of *Christ* over this lower world was visible from his altering and controuling the course of it—From his turning water into wine, John ii. 1—11. Calming the fury of the wind, and restraining the impetuosity

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SINCE then CHRIST has given us all reasonable proof that he was “ a teacher “ come from God;” since the doctrines he taught appear to be in their own nature divine, worthy of God, and beneficial to man; since he has confirmed them in every branch by the most suitable, appropriate miracles; how can we possibly expect to escape, if we neglect so great and so well-attested salvation? For, as the Apostle argues, if “ he, that despised *Moses’* law, died without mercy, “ under two or three witnesses; of how “ much sorer punishment, suppose ye, “ shall he be thought worthy, who hath “ trodden under foot the Son of God, “ and hath counted the blood of the

trousity of the sea, *Matth.* viii. 24—27. *Mark* iv. 37—41. *Luke* viii. 22—25. As also from that tremendous shock, which all nature felt, at his crucifixion, *Matth.* xxvii. 45, 51, 52. *Mark* xv. 33, 38. *Luke* xxiii. 44, &c. His sovereign power in *heaven* he shewed by sending down those gifts upon the Apostles, *Acts* ii. 1, &c. which he had before promised to endue them with, *Luke* xxiv. 49. *John* xv. 26. For these gifts were such, as could come from no other place than from heaven; and were abundant proofs, not only of his being arrived there, but also of his being invested with dominion and authority on high.

“ covenant,

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“ covenant wherewith he was sanctified,
“ an unholy thing, and hath done despite
“ unto the Spirit of grace *?”

BUT perhaps it will be said, “ that
“ several others, as well as CHRIST,
“ have brought revelations into the
“ world, and have wrought mira-
“ cles in confirmation of them; and
“ therefore that these have an equal
“ right to our belief and acceptance, as
“ the christian revelation has; since they
“ were all raised upon the same founda-
“ tion, and are supported by the same
“ credentials.”

’TIS true, various religions have been introduced into the heathen world, at various times, under the pretence of revelation. But what then? Is there any comparison to be made between these religions and the Gospel? Consider their genius and constitution: what marks of divine wisdom or goodness can you discover in them? what reference had they to rational happiness? what correspondence did they bear to the moral exigencies of mankind? Examine the miracles

* Heb. x. 28, 29.

alleged

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alleged in their favour: how mean, trifling, ridiculous, are most of them in themselves? and how poorly are they all attested? And lastly, consider the fate of these religions: how soon did they all vanish, and sink into contempt, when the secular powers that supported them failed, or knowledge and learning advanced in the world?

WITH what colour of reason, then, can you presume to set these pretended revelations in competition with the Gospel of CHRIST, which made its way in spite of all opposing powers, and has stood the critical examination of ages? — yea, and ever will stand it. For, could men be persuaded to lay aside their prejudices and passions; to approach the scripture with seriousness and candour; and to weigh the merits of the christian cause with deliberation and impartiality; there can be no doubt, but they would, to their happiness, be soon convinced, that the evidence for the truth of christianity is as full and satisfactory, as the end it proposes is great and desirable.

The End of the SECOND PART.

alleged in their favour: how mean, trifling, ridiculous, are most of them in themselves? and how poorly are they all affected? And lastly, consider the fate of these religions: how soon did they all vanish, and sink into contempt, when the secular powers that supported them failed, or knowledge and learning advanced in the world?

What what colour of reason, then, can you presume to set these pretended revelations in comparison with the Gospel of Christ, which made its way in spite of all opposing powers, and has stood the critical examination of ages? — yet, and ever will stand it. For, could men be persuaded to lay aside their prejudices and passions, to approach the scripture with seriousness and candour; and to weigh the merits of the christian cause with deliberation and impartiality; there can be no doubt, but they would, to their happiness, be soon convinced, that the evidence for the truth of christianity is as full and satisfactory, as the end it proposes **66** **Al** **Old** **delishle**

